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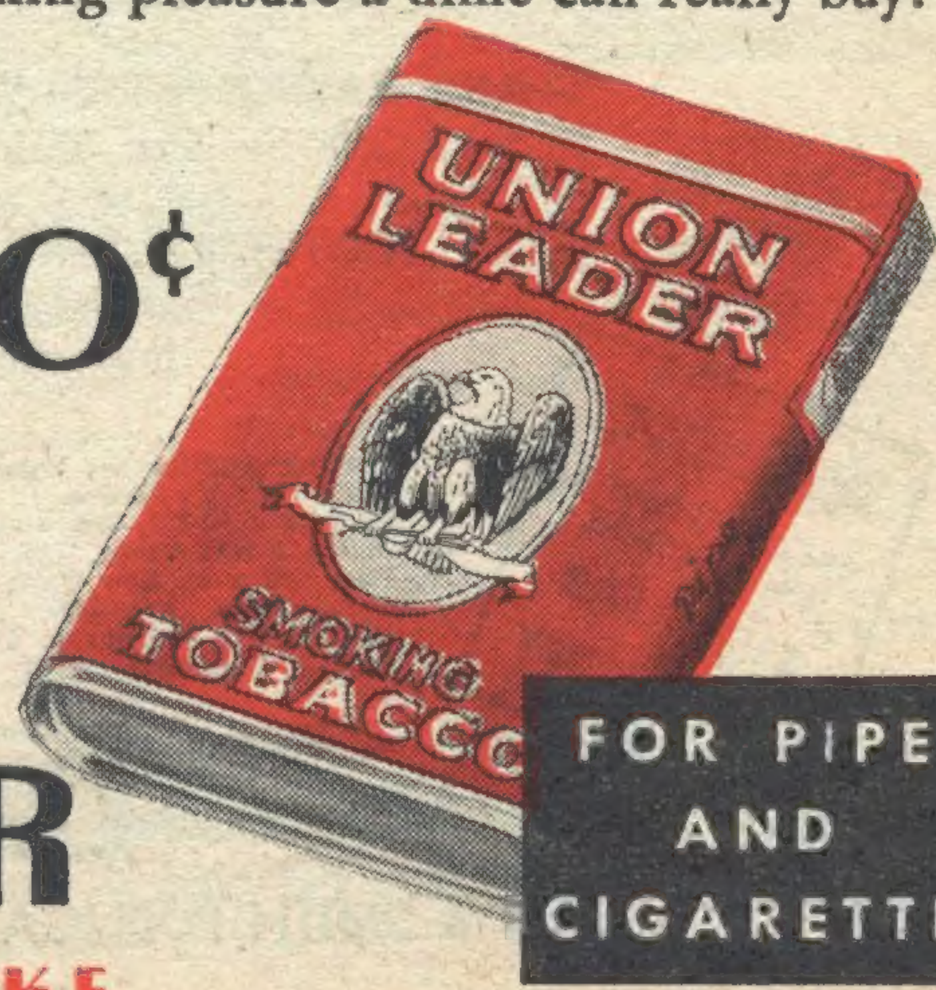

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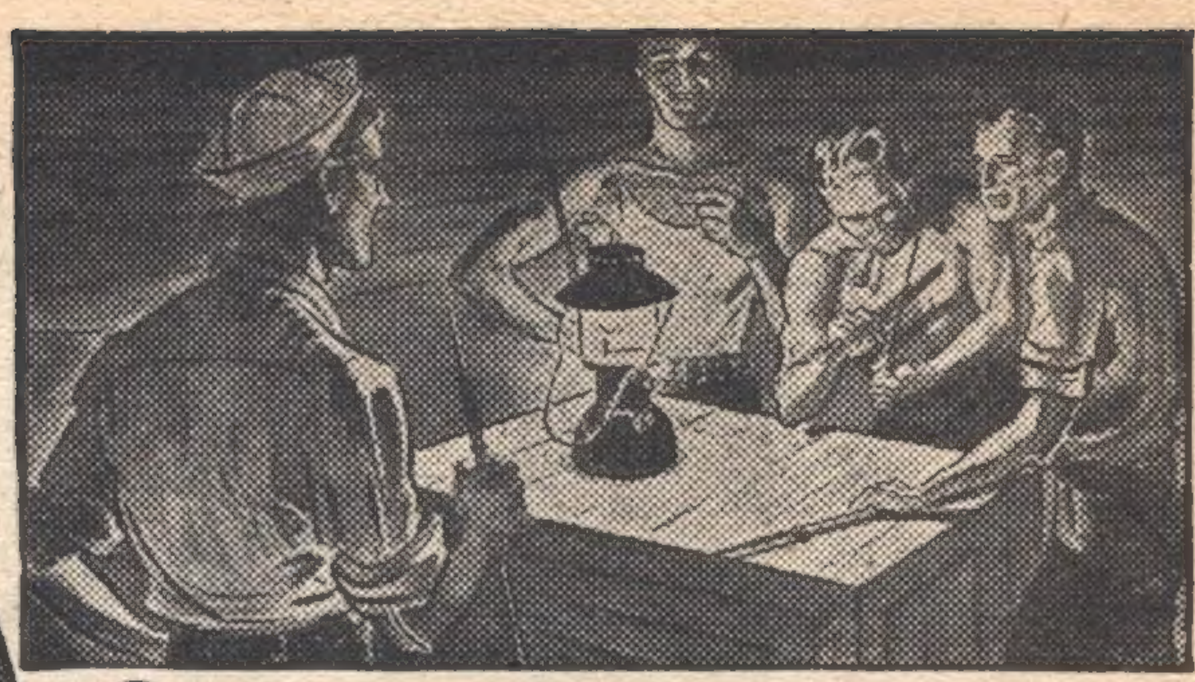
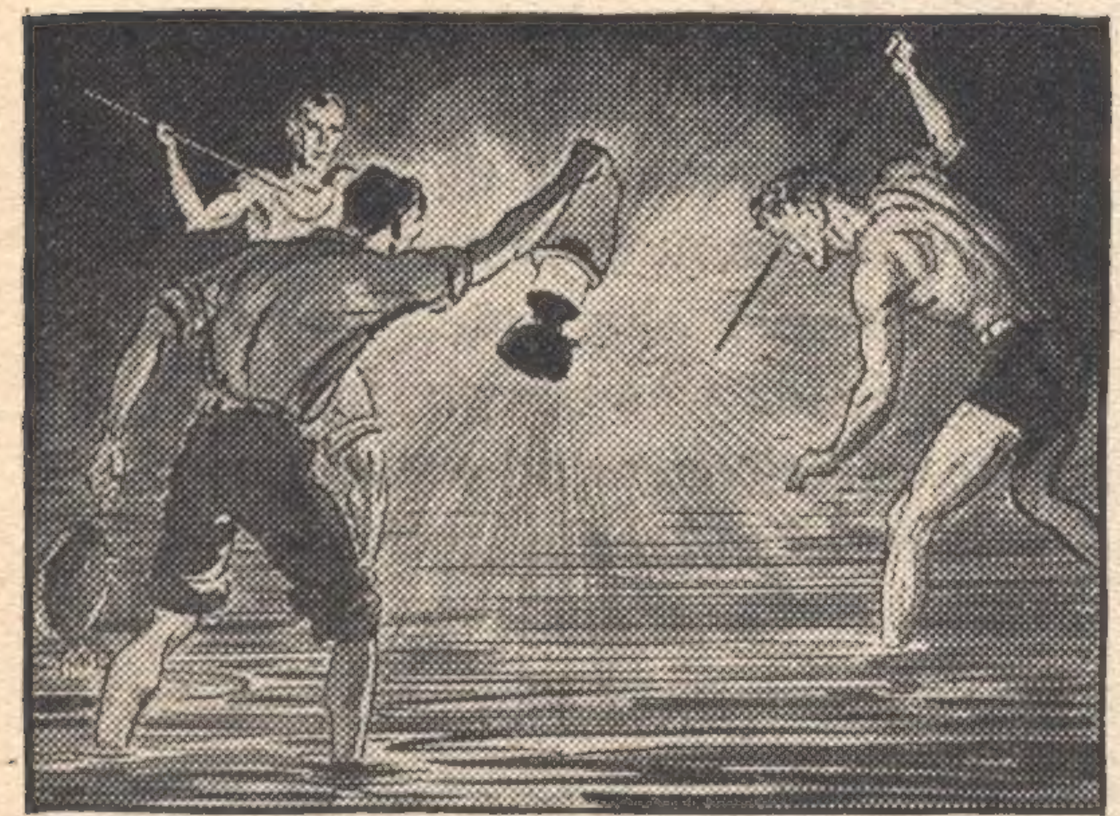
CAUGHT by rising tide in SHARK-FILLED WATERS!

G. Brooks Taylor
Pledger, Texas

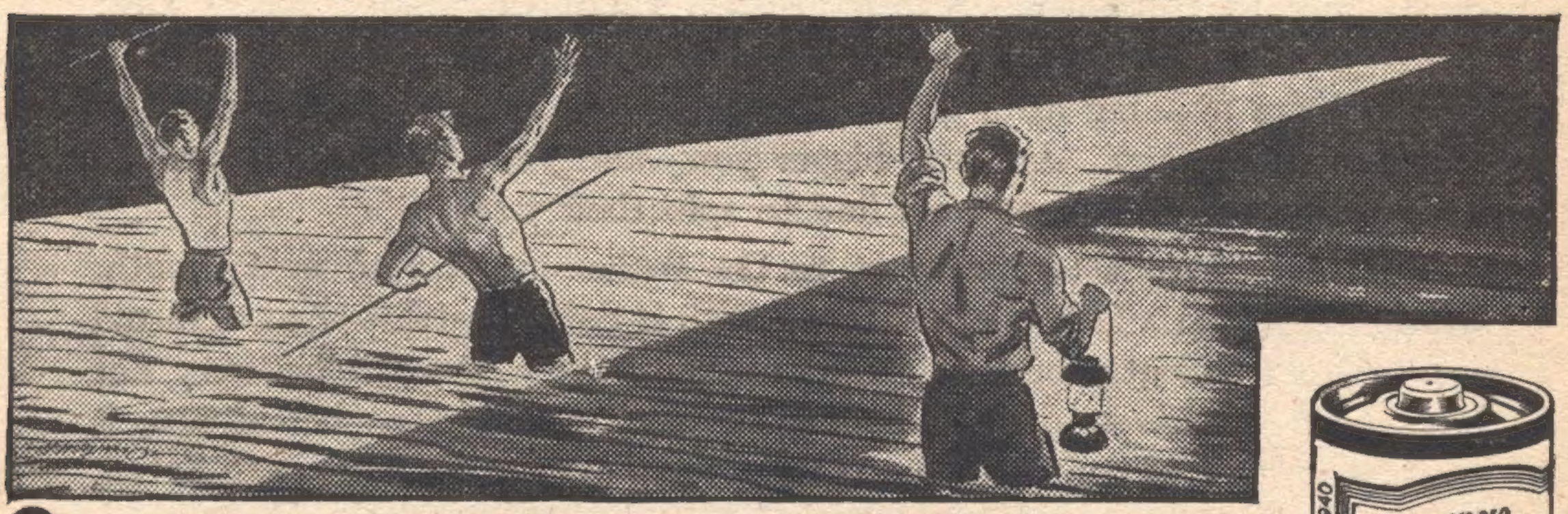


1 **"One night** a party of us started out to spear flounders in the warm, shallow Gulf coast waters," writes Mr. Taylor. "As the tide ebbs away, the flounder remains on the sandy bottom, often in only a few inches of water.



2 **"Enjoying the sport,** we wandered farther and farther from land, trusting the lantern left on the beach with one of our party to guide us safely back.

3 **"Suddenly,** we realized that the tide had turned! Then, our guiding light disappeared. We didn't know which way to run—trapped in shark-filled waters!



4 **"Panic stricken,** we scurried about madly. Then, a pin-point of light far away winked reassuringly! Unable to fix the disabled lantern, the man on shore had sensed our plight, and luckily had a flashlight in his dufflebag. It probably saved us. From now on we will sing the praises of 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries—the kind you can *depend* upon in emergency.

(Signed) G Brooks Taylor"

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OF THINGS BEYOND

Most things grow slimmer with sharing—dinners and packs of cigarettes, for instance—but some, pleasantly, improve. Magazines tend to follow the latter course. This being a democratic nation, we do not insist that you proselytize your casual acquaintances to the new doctrine of Unknown, but we suggest that there are lots of people who would enjoy it and aren't. Some, you know, might be your friends who simply failed to realize that a modern mythology can be quite as amusing and entertaining to modern Americans as the legends and ballads of old were to the feudal lords.

Of course, if your friend should belong to that group who enjoy their superiority by despising pulp magazines, we wouldn't suggest that you disturb that pleasure. But if there are a few you know who might enjoy letting their imaginations loose for a bit—you might be selfish and introduce them to Unknown. Selfish because Unknown, rolling nicely now, thank you, has every intention of rolling better and bigger as the months pass. We're building up a group of authors who are getting the hang of this new mythology. And the bigger you—and your friends—help us to make Unknown, the more we'll find to spin their tales.

We introduce a new convert to the authorship line-up next month; Marion O'Hearn. Her tale has to do with a Salem witch—of an unusual type. It's frequently been said that many of the Salem witches may not have been witches—we don't believe in witchcraft today—but if not, it was not for lack of trying to be. If they never made a compact with Satan, it was simply because, despite all their earnest effort, they couldn't raise up old Nick. It takes two to make a bargain, and, willing though they might be, if Satan couldn't be found, they just had to do their . . . er . . . worst, as worst they could.

But Marion O'Hearn's "Soldiers of the Black Goat" is a tale of a highly efficient and businesslike witch who got results.

And, we promise, a first-rate yarn you'll genuinely enjoy.

The Editor.

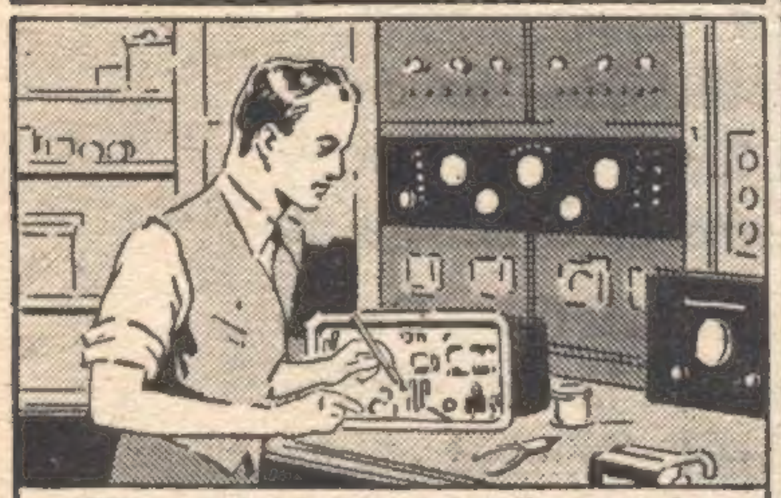
I jumped from $18 a week to $50
-- a Free Book started me toward this
GOOD PAY IN RADIO

HERE'S *How it Happened*

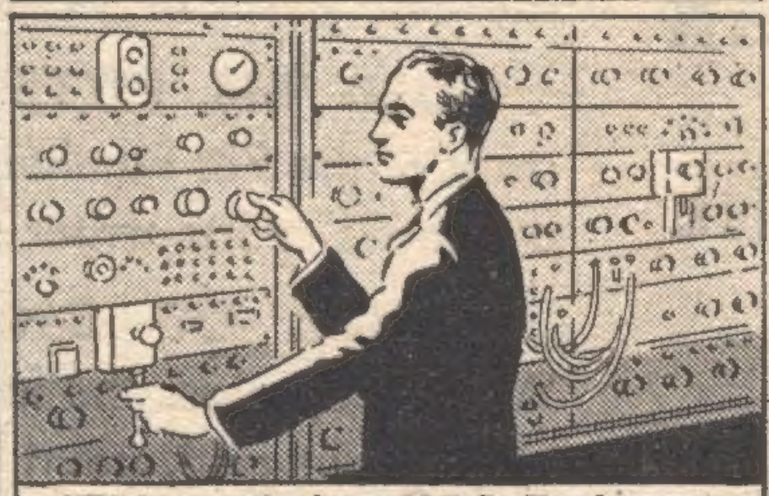
by S. J. E.
(NAME AND ADDRESS SENT UPON REQUEST)

"I had an $18 a week job in a shoe factory. I'd probably be at it today if I hadn't read about the opportunities in Radio and started training at home for them."

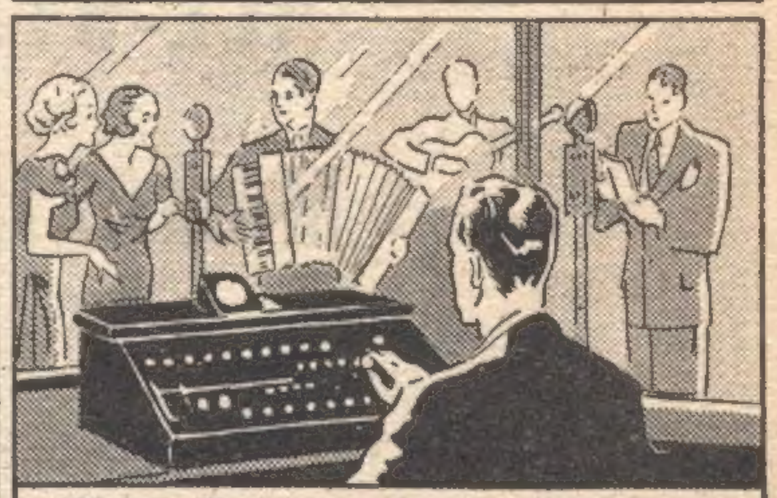
"The training National Radio Institute gave me was so practical I was soon ready to make $5 to $10 a week in spare time servicing Radio sets."



"When I finished training I accepted a job as serviceman with a Radio store. In three weeks I was made service manager at more than twice what I earned in the shoe factory."



"Eight months later N.R.I. Employment Department sent me to Station KWCR as a Radio operator. Now I am Radio Engineer at Station WSUI. I am also connected with Television Station W9XK."



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The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $200 to $500 a year in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

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★ In its December number, Athlete presents a star-studded issue, including:

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HOLD 'EM, PITTSBURGH—The inside story of the Pitt Panther football situation by a famous sports writer who lived through it.

MAKER OF CHAMPIONS—Coach Wm. Foley gives the formula he has used in turning out grid, court and diamond champions in profusion at Bloomfield High School, N. J.

Also articles by **Kingsley Moses** who finds two million forgotten athletes; **Fred Keeling** who discusses the only real amateurs left in America and top-notch stories by **Jack Kofoed, Richard McCann** and others.

★ **Athlete**

ON SALE NOVEMBER 11th

LEST DARKNESS FALL

by L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

Author's Note:

This story represents the realization of two ideas that have been bothering—in a nice sense of the word—me for some time. One is that of writing a story on the Connecticut Yankee theme. The other is that of writing a story about the period that Toynbee calls the Western Interregnum—a period that has not, I think, had as much attention from writers of historical fiction as its melodramatic history entitles it to.

The present story is laid shortly after the time of King Arthur—assuming that Arthur actually lived. Fortunately we know a lot

more about Gothic Italy than we do about post-Roman Britain. (About the latter, in fact, our knowledge is practically nil.) So I did not have to draw too heavily on my imagination for the setting of my story. Just about half the characters mentioned by name were real people, including Thiudahad and his family, Mathasuentha, Wittigis, Urias, Cassiodorus, Honorius, Belisarius and his generals, Bloody John, Antiochus—Thomasus the Syrian's cousin—and a lot of others. As far as possible, I have tried to make their actions consistent with what is known of their real characters—often precious little.

Place names have generally been modernized, while most personal names have been given in their original forms or something very much like it. I regret to report that it is impractical to use any consistent system of spelling names. If we modernize them all, Marcus and Rekkared and Hlodovik become Mark and Richard and Louis, which is all very well, but then we have to make such a well-known historical character as Theoderik the Great unrecognizable by calling him by his modern cognate Dietrich. (The literal transliteration of his name from Gothic is Thiudareiks, rhyming with "weeks.") If we try to leave them all in their ancient forms, we find ourselves talking about the cities of Roma and Patavium and Constantinopolis instead of Rome and Padua and Constantinople, which sounds slightly silly.

For having my characters speak often in a highly colloquial, not to say slangy, manner, I offer the excuse that in most well-developed languages there is apt to be a gap between vulgar and literary speech, and that most such languages have colloquial and slang forms that are used in speech, but usually not preserved in literature. If vulgar Latin had no exact equivalent for such a word as "gypped," it probably sounded to a well-educated sixth century man even more corrupt and "incorrect" than would the speech of a New York hackman to a bishop of the Church of England.

The principal authorities for the setting of the story are, ancient: Cassiodorus, Jordanes, Procopius, and Sidonius; modern: Bury, Gibbon, Hodgkin, McGovern, and Moss. Of these Procopius and Hodgkin are the most informative. For a picture of the times, the best historical novel is Graves' "Count Belisarius," to which the present work owes a good deal in the way of inspiration.

L. S. DE C.

I.

TANCREDI took his hands off the wheel again and waved them. "—so I envy you, Dr. Padway. Here in Roma we have still some work to do. But *pah!* It is all filling in little gaps. Nothing big, nothing new. And restoration work. Building contractor's work. Again, *pah!*"

"Professor Tancredi," said Martin Padway patiently, "as I said, I'm not a doctor. I hope to be one soon, if I can get a thesis out of this Lebanon dig." Being himself the most cautious of drivers, his knuckles were white from gripping the side of the little Fiat, and his right foot ached from trying to shove it through the floor boards.

Tancredi snatched the wheel in time to avoid a lordly Isotta by the thickness of a razor blade. The Isotta went its way thinking dark thoughts. "Oh, what is the difference? Here everybody is a doc-tor, whether he is or not, if you understand me. And such a smart young man as you— What was I talking about?"

"That depends." Padway closed his eyes as a pedestrian just escaped destruction. "You were talking about Etruscan inscriptions, and then about the nature of time, and then about Roman archaeol—"

"Ah, yes, the nature of time. This is just a silly idea of mine, you understand. I was saying, all these people who just disappear, they have slipped back down the suitcase."

"The what?"

"The trunk, I mean. The trunk of the tree of time. When they stop slipping, they are back in some former time. But as soon as they do anything, they change all subsequent history."

"Sounds like a paradox," said Padway.

"No-o. The trunk continues to exist. But a new branch starts out where they come to rest. It has to, otherwise we would all disappear, because history would have changed and our parents might never have met."

"That's a thought," said Padway. "It's bad enough knowing the sun might become a nova, but if we're also likely to vanish because somebody has gone back to the twelfth century and stirred things up—"

"No. That has never happened. We have never vanished, that is. You see, doc-tor? We continue to exist, but another history has been started. Perhaps there are many such, all existing somewhere. Maybe they aren't much different from ours. Maybe the man comes to rest in the middle of the ocean. So what? The fish eat him, and things go on as before. Or they think he is mad, and shut him up or kill him. Again, not much difference. But suppose he becomes a king or a *duce?* What then? Are you coming to my house for dinner tomorrow?"

"Wh-what? Why, yes, I'll be glad to. I'm sailing next—"

"*Si, si.* I will show you the equations I have worked out. Energy must be conserved, even in changing one's time. But nothing of this to my colleagues, please. You understand." The sallow little man took his hands off the wheel to wag both forefingers at Padway. "It is a harmless eccentricity. But one's professional reputation must not suffer."

"Eek!" said Padway.

Tancredi jammed on the brake and skidded to a stop behind a truck halted at the intersection of the Via del Mare and the Piazza Aracoeli. "What was I talking about?" he asked.

"Harmless eccentricities," said Padway. He felt like adding that Professor Tancredi's driving ranked among his less harmless ones. But the man had been very kind to him.

"Ah, yes. Things get out, and people talk. Archaeologists talk even worse than most people. Are you married?"

"What?" Padway felt he should have gotten used to this sort of thing by now. He hadn't. "Why—yes."

"Good. Bring your wife along." It was a surprising invitation for an Italian to issue.

"She's back in Chicago." Padway didn't feel like explaining that he and his wife had been separated for over a year.

He could see, now, that it hadn't been entirely Betty's fault. To a person of her background and tastes he must have seemed pretty impossible: a man who danced badly, refused to play bridge, and whose idea of fun was to get a few similar creatures in for an evening of heavy talk on the future of capitalism and the love life of the bullfrog. At first she had been thrilled by the idea of traveling in far places, but one taste of living in a tent and watching her husband mutter over the inscriptions on potsherds had cured that.

And he wasn't much to look at—rather small, with outsize nose and ears and a diffident manner. At college they had called him Mouse Padway. Oh, well, a man in exploratory work was a fool to marry, anyway. Just look at the divorce rate among them—anthropologists, paleontologists, and such—

"Could you drop me at the Pantheon?" he asked. "I've never examined it closely, and it's just a couple of blocks to my hotel."

"Yes, doc-tor, though I am afraid you will get wet. It looks like rain, does it not?"

"That's all right. This coat will shed water."

Tancredi shrugged. They bucketed down the Corso Vittorio Emanuele and screeched around the corner into the Via Cestari. Padway got out at the Piazza del Pantheon, and Tancredi departed, waving both arms and shouting: "Tomorrow at eight, then? *Si*, fine!"

Padway looked at the building for a few minutes. He had always thought it a very ugly one, with the Corinthian front stuck on the brick rotunda. Of course that great concrete dome had taken some engineering, considering when it had been erected. Then he had to jump to avoid being spattered as a man in a Fascist uniform tore by on a motorcycle.

Padway walked over to the portico, round which clustered men engaged in the national sport of loitering. One of the things that he liked about Italy was that here he was, by comparison, a fairly tall man. Thunder rumbled behind him, and a raindrop struck his hand. He began to take long steps. Even if his trench coat would shed water, he didn't want his new fifty-lire Borsalino soaked. He liked that hat.

His reflections on hats were cut off in their prime by the granddaddy of all lightning flashes, which struck the Piazza somewhere to his right. The pavement dropped out from under him like a trapdoor. He fell two feet and landed with a jar, almost falling. As he staggered he hit his right shin on something hard. He said, "Ouch!"

As the reddish-purple after-images on his retinas cleared, he saw that he was standing in the depression caused by the drop of a roughly circular piece of paving. The rain was coming down hard, now. He climbed out of the pit and ran under the portico of the Pantheon. It was so dark outside that the lights in the building ought to have been switched on, but they weren't. Instead, Padway noticed something curious: the red brick of the rotunda was covered by slabs of marble facing. That, he thought, was one of the restoration jobs that Tancredi had been complaining about.

It was also curious that the loafers in front of the Pantheon should have somehow changed their coats and pants for dirty white woolen tunics. Other people had gathered under the portico to get out of the rain; these also wore tunics, sometimes with cloaks over them. A few of them stared at Padway, but without much curiosity. He and they were still staring at one another when the rain let up a few minutes later. And he was beginning to be more and more frightened.

The tunics alone wouldn't have done it. A single incongruous fact like that *might* have a rational, if recondite, explanation. But not so a thousand incongruous facts—such as the replacement of the concrete sidewalk by slabs of slate. There were still buildings around the Piazza, but they weren't the same buildings. Over the lower ones Padway could see that the Senate House and the Ministry of Communications—both fairly conspicuous objects—were missing. Even the sounds and smells of the city were different. The honk of taxi horns was absent, for the simple reason that there were no taxis. There were, instead, two oxcarts creaking down the Via della Minerva. The garlic-and-gasoline aroma of modern Rome had been replaced by a barnyard symphony wherein the smell of horse was the strongest motif.

The sun came out. Padway

stepped out into it. Yes, the portico still bore the inscription crediting the construction of the building to M. Agrippa. But there were still the marble facing, and the men in tunics, and—

Glancing around to see that nobody was watching him, Padway stepped up to one of the pillars and slammed his fist into it. It hurt.

"Hell," said Padway, looking at his bruised knuckles. He thought, I'm not asleep, so I must be crazy. What was Tancredi talking about? Something about slipping back in time? I'm imagining that I've done just that. I think I'm in the later Roman Empire. At least, that's what it looks like. If I can find a policeman I'll ask him to take me to a hospital or something. But there were no policemen in sight.

Padway gradually got his whirling mind under control. If this Rome was an illusion, it was an amazingly consistent and substantial one. There was nothing pathological about the early-afternoon sunshine, nothing fantastic about the loafers in front of the Pantheon and the beggars around the Piazza. A couple of the loafers were conversing; not exactly in Italian, though Padway found he could understand a good deal of what they said. That's right, he thought, they'd be speaking a late form of vulgate Latin, rather more than halfway from the language of Cicero to that of Dante.

He couldn't simply stand there indefinitely. He'd have to ask questions and get himself oriented. The idea gave him gooseflesh. He had a phobia about accosting strangers, and to ask questions in a language of which he had only a vague theoretical knowledge, such as most archaeologists have—*br-r-r!* Twice he opened his mouth, but his glottis closed up tight with stage fright.

Come on, Padway, get a grip on yourself. "Beg pardon, but could you tell me the date?"

The man addressed, a mild-looking person with a loaf of bread under his arm, stopped and looked blank. "What?"

"I said, could you tell me the date?"

The man frowned. Was he going to be nasty? "Oh, you want to know the *date?*"

"*Sic,* the date."

"*Sic,* I understand you. The date. Hm-m-m." The man counted on his fingers. "I *think* it's October 9th."

"What year?"

"What *year?*"

"*Sic,* what year?"

"Twelve eighty-eight *Anno Urbis Conditae.*"

It was Padway's turn to be puzzled. "What's that in the Christian era?"

"You mean, how many years since the birth of Christ?"

"*Hoc ille*—that's right."

"Well, now—I don't know; five hundred and something. Better ask a priest, stranger."

"I will," said Padway. "Thanks a lot."

"It's nothing," said the man, and went on about his business. Padway's knees were weak, though the man hadn't bitten him, but had answered his questions in a civil enough manner. But it sounded as though Padway, who was a peaceable man, hadn't picked a very peaceable period.

What was he to *do?* Well, what would any sensible man do under the circumstances? He'd have to find a place to sleep and a method of making a living. He was a little startled when he realized how

completely his mind had accepted the reality of his situation.

He strolled around the corner, to be out of sight of the loafers, and began going through his pockets. The roll of Italian bank notes would be about as useful as a broken five-cent mousetrap. No, even less; you might be able to fix the mousetrap. A book of American Express traveler's checks, a Roman street-car transfer, an Illinois driver's license, a leather case full of keys—all ditto. His pen, pencil, and lighter would be useful as long as ink, leads, and lighter fluid held out. His pocket-knife and his watch would undoubtedly fetch good prices, but he wanted to hang onto them as long as he could.

He counted the fistful of small change. There were just twenty coins, beginning with four ten-lira silver cartwheels. They added up to forty-nine lire, eight centesimi, or about five dollars. The silver and bronze should be exchangeable. As for the nickel fifty-centesimo and twenty-centesimo pieces, he'd have to see. He started walking.

It wasn't long before any lingering hopes that he'd merely blundered into a movie set were dashed by the discovery that the street plan was quite different from that of modern Rome. Which it naturally would be. Padway found his little pocket street map nearly useless. However, there seemed to be nothing to do but continue walking.

He stopped before an establishment that advertised itself as that of S. Dentatus, goldsmith and money changer. He took a deep breath and went in.

S. Dentatus had a face rather like that of a frog. Padway laid out his change and said: "I . . . I'd like to change this into local money, please."

S. Dentatus blinked at the coins. He picked them up, one by one, and scratched at them a little with a pointed instrument. "Where do these—you—come from?" he finally croaked.

"America."

"Never heard of it."

"It's a long way off."

"Hm-m-m. What are these made of? Tin?" The money changer indicated the four nickel coins.

"Nickel."

"What's that? Some funny metal they have in your country?"

"*Hoc ille.*"

"What's it worth?"

Padway thought for a second of trying to put a fantastically high value on the coins. While he was working up his courage, S. Dentatus interrupted his thoughts:

"It doesn't matter, because I wouldn't touch the stuff. There wouldn't be any market for it. But these other pieces—let's see—". He got out a balance and weighed the bronze coins, and then the silver coins. He pushed counters up and down the grooves of a little bronze abacus, and said: "They're worth just under one solidus. Give you a solidus even for them."

Padway didn't answer immediately. Eventually he'd have to take what was offered, as he hated the idea of bargaining and didn't know the values of the current money. But to save his face he had to appear to consider the offer carefully.

A man stepped up to the counter beside him. He was heavy, ruddy man with a flaring brown mustache and his hair in a long, or Ginger Rogers, bob. He wore a linen blouse and long leather pants. He grinned at Padway, and rattled off: "*Ho,*

frijonds, habais faurthei! Allai skalljans sind waidedjans."

Padway answered: "I . . . I'm sorry, but I don't understand."

The man's face fell a little; he dropped into Latin: "Sorry, thought you were from the Chersonese, from your clothes. I couldn't stand around and watch a fellow Goth swindled without saying anything, hah-hah!"

The Goth's loud, explosive laugh made Padway jump a little; he hoped nobody noticed. "I appreciate that. What is this stuff worth?"

"What has he offered you?" Padway told him. "Well," said the man, "even I can see that you're being hornswoggled. You give him a fair rate, Sextus, or I'll make you eat your own stock. That would be funny, hah-hah!"

S. Dentatus sighed resignedly. "Oh, very well, a solidus and a half. How am I to live, with you fellows interfering with legitimate business all the time? That would be, at the current rate of exchange, one solidus thirty-one sesterces."

"What's this about a rate of exchange?" asked Padway.

The Goth answered: "The gold-silver rate. Gold has been going down the last few months."

Padway said: "I think I'll take it all in silver."

While Dentatus sourely counted out ninety-three sesterces, the Goth asked: "Where do you come from? Somewhere up in the Hunnish country?"

"No," said Padway, "a place farther than that, called America. Never heard of it, did you?"

"No. Well now, that's interesting. I'm glad I met you, young fellow. It'll give me something to tell the wife about. She thinks I head for the nearest brothel every time I come to town, hah-hah!" He fumbled in his handbag and brought out a large gold ring and an unfaceted gem. "Sextus, this thing came out of its setting again. Fix it up, will you? And no substitutions, mind."

As they went out the Goth spoke to Padway in a lowered voice: "The real reason I'm glad to come to town is that somebody put a curse on my house."

"A curse? What kind of curse?"

The Goth nodded solemnly. "A shortness-of-breath curse. When I'm home I can't breathe. I go around like this:" He gasped asthmatically. "But as soon as I get away from home I'm all right. And I think I know who did it."

"Who?"

"I foreclosed a couple of mortgages last year. I can't prove anything against the former owners, *but*—" He winked ponderously at Padway.

"Tell me," said Padway, "do you keep animals in your house?"

"Couple of dogs. There's the stock, of course, but we don't let them in the house. Though a shote got in yesterday and ran off with one of my shoes. Had to chase it all over the damned farm. I must have been a sight, hah-hah!"

"Well," said Padway, "try keeping the dogs outdoors all the time and having your place well swept every day. That might stop your wheezing."

"Now, that's interesting. You really think it would?"

"I don't know. Some people get the shortness of breath from dog hairs. Try it for a couple of months and see."

"I still think it's a curse, young fellow, but I'll try your scheme. I've tried everything from a couple of Greek physicians to one of St.

Abruptly, Padway found the Sicilian had transferred his attentions, and was industriously seeking to carve him—

Ignatius' teeth, and none of them works." He hesitated. "If you don't mind, what were you in your own country?"

Padway thought quickly, then remembered the few acres he owned in down-state Illinois. "I had a farm," he said.

"That's fine," roared the Goth, clapping Padway on the back with staggering force. "I'm a friendly soul but I don't want to get mixed up with people too far above or below my own class, hah-hah! My name is Nevitta; Nevitta Gummund's son. If you're passing up the Flaminian Way sometime, drop in. My place is about eight miles north of here."

"Thanks. My name is Martin Padway. Where would be a good place to rent a room?"

"That depends. If I didn't want to spend too much money, I'd pick a place farther from the river. Plenty of boardinghouses over toward the Viminal Hill. Well, I must go." He whistled sharply and called: "*Hermann, hiri her!*" Hermann, who was dressed much like his master, got up off the curb and trotted down the street leading the two horses, his leather pants making a distinctive *flop-flop* as he ran. Nevitta said: "Don't forget—What did you say your name was?"

"Martin Padway—Martinus is good enough." (Padway, properly, pronounced it *marteeno*.)

"Don't forget, Martinus, come see me sometime. I always like to hear a man who speaks Latin with a worse accent than mine, hah-hah!" He squeezed Padway's hand in his large red paw, mounted, and trotted off.

Padway had more questions on the tip of his tongue, but Nevitta evidently had his own business to attend to. Padway watched the stocky figure around a corner, then trudged toward the river. Not bad for a start, he thought. But you'd better get over this damnable shyness if you're going to get on.

II.

Padway awoke early with a bad taste in his mouth, and a stomach that seemed to have some grasshopper in its ancestry. Perhaps that was the dinner he'd eaten; not bad, but unfamiliar—consisting mainly of stew smothered in leeks. The restaurateur must have wondered when Padway made plucking motions at the table top; he was unthinkingly trying to pick up a knife and fork that weren't there.

One might very well sleep badly the first night on a bed consisting merely of a straw-stuffed mattress. And it had cost him an extra sesterce a day, too. An itch made him pull up his undershirt. Sure enough, a row of red spots on his midriff showed that he had not, after all, slept alone.

He got up and washed with the soap he'd bought the previous evening. He'd been pleasantly surprised to find that soap had already been invented. But when he broke a piece off the cake, which generally resembled a slightly decayed pumpkin pie, he found that the inside was soft and gooey because of incomplete potash-soda metathesis. Moreover, the soap was so alkaline that he thought he might as well have cleaned his face and hands by sandpapering.

Then he made a determined effort to shave with a little olive oil and a sixth-century razor. The process was so painful that he wondered if it mightn't be better to let nature take its course.

He was in a tight fix, he knew. His money would last about a week

—with care, perhaps a little longer. At that he'd beaten the superintendent of the apartment house down from seven to five sesterces a day. (Having no baggage, he had had to pay in advance.)

If a man knew he was going to be whisked back into the past, he would load himself down with all sorts of useful junk in preparation: an encyclopedia, texts on metallurgy, mathematics, and medicine, a slide rule, and so forth. And a gun, with plenty of ammunition. But Padway had no gun, no encyclopedia, nothing but what an ordinary twentieth century man carries around in his pockets. Oh, a little more, because he'd been traveling at the time: such useful things as the travelers' checks, a hopelessly anachronistic street map, and his passport.

And he had his wits. He'd need them.

The problem was to find a way of using his twentieth-century knowledge that would support him without getting him into trouble. You couldn't, for example, set out to build an automobile. It would take several lifetimes to collect the necessary materials, and several more to learn how to handle them and to worry them into the proper form. Not to mention the question of fuel.

The air was fairly warm, and he thought of leaving his hat and vest in the room. But the door had the simplest kind of ward lock, with a bronze key big enough to be presented by a mayor to a visiting dignitary. Padway was sure he could pick the lock with a knife blade. So he took all his clothes along.

He went back to the same restaurant for breakfast. The place had a sign over the counter reading, "RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS NOT ALLOWED." Padway asked the proprietor for the name and address of a Roman banker.

The man referred him to one Thomasus the Syrian. He said: "You follow Long Street down to the Arch of Constantine, and then New Street to the Julian Basilica, and then you turn left onto Tuscan Street, and—" and so on.

Padway made him repeat it twice. Even so, it took most of the morning to find his objective. His walk took him past the Forum area, full of temples, most of whose columns had been removed for use in the five big and thirty-odd little churches scattered around the city. The temples looked pathetic, like a Park Avenue doorman bereft of his pants. At the sight of the Ulpian Library, Padway had to suppress an urge to say to hell with his present errand. He loved burrowing in libraries, and he definitely did not love the idea of bearding a strange banker in a strange land with a strange proposition. In fact, the idea scared him silly, but his was the kind of courage that shows itself best when its owner is about to collapse from blue funk. So he grimly kept on toward the Tiber.

THOMASUS hung out in a rather shabby two-story building near the Aemilian Bridge. The Negro at the door—probably a slave—ushered Padway into what he would have called a living room. Presently the banker appeared. Thomasus was a paunchy, bald man with a cataract in his left eye. He gathered his shabby robe about him, sat down, and said: "Well, young man?"

"I"—Padway swallowed and started again—"I'm interested in a loan."

"How much?"

"I don't know yet. I want to

start a business, and I'll have to investigate prices and things first."

"You want to start a new business? In Rome? Hm-m-m." Thomasus rubbed his hands together. "What security can you give?"

"None at all."

"*What?*"

"I said, none at all. You'd just have to take a chance on me."

"But . . . but my dear sir, don't you know anybody in town?"

"I know a Gothic farmer named Nevitta Gummund's son."

"Oh, yes, Nevitta. I know him slightly. Would he go your note?"

Padway thought. Nevitta, despite his expansive gestures, had impressed him as being pretty close where money was concerned. "No," he said, "I don't think he would."

Thomasus rolled his eyes upward. "Do You hear that, God? He comes in here, a barbarian who hardly knows Latin, and admits that he has no security and no guarantors, and still he expects me to lend him money! Did you ever hear the like?"

"I think I can make you change your mind," said Padway.

Thomasus shook his head and made clucking noises. "You certainly have plenty of self-confidence, young man. I admit as much. What did you say your name was?" Padway told him what he had told Nevitta. "All right, what's your scheme?"

"As you correctly inferred," said Padway, hoping he was showing the right mixture of dignity and cordiality, "I'm a foreigner. I just arrived from a place called America. That's a long way off, and naturally it has a lot of customs and features different from those of Rome. Now, if you could back me in the manufacture of some of our commodities that are not known here—"

"Ai!" yelped Thomasus, throwing up his hands. "Did You hear that, God? He doesn't want me to back him in some well-known business. Oh, no. He wants me to start some newfangled line that nobody ever heard of! I couldn't think of such a thing, Martinus. What was it you had in mind?"

"Well, we have a drink made from wine, called brandy, that ought to go well."

"No, I couldn't consider it. Though I admit that Rome needs manufacturing establishments badly. When the capital was moved to Ravenna all revenue from imperial salaries was cut off, which is why the population has shrunk so the last century or so. The town is badly located, and hasn't any real reason for being any more. But you can't get anybody to do anything about it. King Thiudahad spends his time writing Latin verses. Poetry! But no, young man, I couldn't put money into a wild project for making some weird barbarian drink."

Padway's knowledge of sixth-century history was beginning to come back to him. He said: "Speaking of Thiudahad, has Queen Amalasuentha been murdered yet?"

"Why"—Thomasus looked sharply at Padway with his good eye—"yes, she has." That meant that Justinian, the Roman emperor at Constantinople, would soon begin his disastrously successful effort to reconquer Italy for the empire. "But why did you put your question that way?"

"What way?" asked Padway innocently. He saw where he'd made a slip.

"You asked whether she had been murdered *yet*. That sounds as though you had known ahead of

time that she would be killed. Are you a soothsayer?"

Padway shrugged. "Not exactly. I heard before I came here that there had been trouble between the two Gothic sovereigns, and that Thiudahad would put his coruler out of the way if he had a chance. I just wondered how it came out, that's all."

"Yes," said the Syrian. "It was a shame. She was quite a woman. Good-looking, too, though she was in her forties. They caught her in her bath last summer and held her head under. Personally I think Thiudahad's wife Gudelinda put the old jellyfish up to it. He wouldn't have nerve enough by himself."

"Maybe she was jealous," said Padway. "Now, about the manufacture of that barbarian drink, as you call it—"

"What? You *are* a stubborn fellow. It's absolutely out of the question, though. You have to be careful, doing business here in Rome. It's not like a growing town. Now, if this were Constantinople—" He sighed. "You can really make money in the East. But I don't care to live there, with Justinian making life exciting for the heretics, as he calls them. What's your religion, by the way?"

"What's yours? Not that it makes any difference to me."

"Nestorian."

"Well," said Padway carefully, "I'm what we call a Congregationalist." (It was not really true, but he guessed an agnostic would hardly be popular in this theology-mad world.) "That's the nearest thing we have to Nestorianism in my country. But about the manufacture of brandy—"

"Nothing doing, young man. Absolutely not. How much equipment would you need to start?"

"Oh, a big copper kettle and a lot of copper tubing, and a stock of wine for the raw material. It wouldn't have to be good wine. And I could get started quicker with a couple of men to help me."

"I'm afraid it's too much of a gamble. I'm sorry."

"Look here, Thomasus, if I show you how you can halve the time it takes you to do your accounts, would you be interested?"

"You mean you're a mathematical genius or something?"

"No, but I have a system I can teach your clerks."

Thomasus closed his eyes, like some Levantine Buddha. "Well—if you didn't want more than fifty solidi—"

"All business is a gamble, you know."

"That's the trouble with it. But —I'll do it, *if* your accounting system is as good as you say it is."

"How about interest?" asked Padway.

"Three percent."

Padway was startled. Then he asked: "Three percent per what?"

"Per month, of course."

"Too much."

"Well, what do you expect?"

"In my country six percent per year is considered fairly high."

"You mean you expect *me* to lend you money at that rate? Ai! Did You hear that, God? Young man, you ought to go live among the wild Saxons, to teach them something about piracy. But I like you, so I'll make it twenty-five per year."

"Still too much. I might consider seven and a half."

"You're being ridiculous. I wouldn't consider less than twenty for a minute."

"No. Nine percent, perhaps."

"I'm not even interested. Too bad; it would have been nice to do

business with you. Fifteen."

"That's out, Thomasus. Nine and a half."

"Did You hear that, God? He wants me to make him a present of my business! Go away, Martinus. You're wasting your time here. I couldn't possibly come down any more. Twelve and a half. That's absolutely the bottom."

"Ten."

"Don't you understand Latin? I said that was the bottom. Good day; I'm glad to have met you." When Padway got up, the banker sucked his breath through his teeth as though he had been wounded unto death, and rasped: "Eleven."

"Ten and a half."

"Would you mind showing your teeth? My word, they are human after all. I thought maybe they were shark's teeth. Oh, very well. This sentimental generosity of mine will be my ruin yet. And now let's see that accounting system of yours."

An hour later three chagrined clerks sat in a row and regarded Padway with expressions of, respectively, wonderment, apprehension, and active hatred. Padway had just finished doing a simple piece of long division with Arabic numerals at the time when the three clerks, using Roman numerals, had barely gotten started on the interminable trial-and-error process that their system required. Padway translated his answer back into Roman, wrote it out on his tablet, and handed the tablet to Thomasus.

"There you are," he said. "Have one of the boys check it by multiplying the divisor by the quotient. You might as well call them off their job; they'll be at it all night."

The middle-aged clerk, the one with the hostile expression, copied down the figures and began checking grimly. When after an interminable time he finished, he threw down his stylus. "That man's a sorcerer of some sort," he growled. "He does the operations in his head, and puts down all those silly marks just to fool us."

"Not at all," said Padway urbanely. "I can teach you to do the same."

"What? *Me* take lessons from a long-trousered barbarian? I—" He started to say more, but Thomasus cut him off by saying that he'd do as he was told, and no back talk. "Is that so?" sneered the man. "I'm a free Roman citizen, and I've been keeping books for twenty years. I guess I know my business. If you want a man to use that heathen system, go buy yourself some cringing Greek slave. I'm through!"

"Now see what you've done!" cried Thomasus, when the clerk had taken his coat off the peg and marched out. "I shall have to hire another man, and with this labor shortage—"

"That's all right," soothed Padway. "These two boys will be able to do the work of three easily, once they learn American arithmetic. And that isn't all; we have something called double-entry bookkeeping, which enables you to tell any time how you stand financially, and to catch errors—"

"Do You hear that, God? He wants to turn the whole banking business upside down! Please, dear sir, one thing at a time; or you'll drive us mad! I'll grant your loan; I'll help you buy your equipment. Only don't spring any more of your revolutionary methods just now!"

Padway bought his copper kettle at what he would have called a junk shop. But nobody had ever heard

of copper tubing. After he and Thomasus had exhausted the secondhand metal shops between the latter's house and the warehouse district at the south end of town, he started in on coppersmiths' places. The coppersmiths had never heard of copper tubing, either. A couple of them offered to try to turn out some, but at astronomical prices.

"Martinus!" wailed the banker. "We've walked at least five miles, and my feet are giving out. Wouldn't lead pipe do just as well? You can get all you want of that."

"It would do fine except for one thing," said Padway, "we'd probably poison all our customers. And that *might* give the business a bad name, you know."

"Well, I don't see that you're getting anywhere as it is."

Padway thought a minute while Thomasus and Ajax, the Negro slave, who was carrying the kettle, watched him. "If I could hire a man who was generally handy with tools, and had some metal-working experience, I could show him how to make copper tubing. How do you go about hiring people here?"

Padway hired his man the third day after his first meeting with Thomasus the Syrian. The man was a dark, cocky little Sicilian named Hannibal Scipio. Padway had meanwhile taken a short lease on a tumbledown house on the Quirinal, and collected such equipment and personal effects as he thought he would need. He bought a short-sleeved tunic to wear over his pants, with the idea of making himself less conspicuous. Adults seldom paid much attention to him in this motley town, but he was tired of having small boys follow him through the streets. He did, however insist on having ample pockets sewn into the tunic, despite the tailor's shocked protests at ruining a good, stylish garment with this heathen innovation.

He whittled a mandrel out of wood and showed Hannibal Scipio how to bend the copper stripping around it. Hannibal claimed to know all that was necessary about soldering. But when Padway tried to bend the tubing into shape for his still, the seams popped open with the greatest of ease. After that Hannibal was a little less cocky—for a while.

"Shouldn't there be an incantation or something?" asked Thomasus the Syrian.

"No," said Padway. "As I've already said three times, this isn't magic." Looking around though, he could see how some mumbo-jumbo might have been appropriate: running his first large batch off at night in the creaky old house, illuminated only by flickering oil lamps, in the presence of only Thomasus, and Hannibal Scipio, and Ajax. All three looked apprehensive, and the Negro seemed all teeth and eyeballs. He stared at the still as if he expected it to start producing demons in carload lots any minute.

"It takes a long time, doesn't it?" said Thomasus, rubbing his pudgy hands together nervously. His good eye glittered at the nozzle from which drop after yellow drop slowly dripped.

"I think that's enough," said Padway. "We'll get mostly water if we continue the run." He directed Hannibal to remove the kettle and poured the contents of the receiving flask into a bottle. "I'd better try it first," he said. He poured out a little into a cup, sniffed, and took a swallow. It was definitely not good brandy. But it would do.

"Have some?" he said to the banker.

"Give some to Ajax first."

Ajax backed away, holding his hands in front of him, palms out. "No, please, master—"

He seemed so alarmed that Thomasus didn't insist. "Hannibal, how about you?"

"Oh, no," said Hannibal. "Meaning no disrespect, but I've got a delicate stomach. The least little thing upsets it. And if you're all through, I'd like to go home. I didn't sleep well last night." He yawned theatrically. Padway let him go, and took another swallow.

"Well," said Thomasus, "if you're sure it won't hurt me, I might take just a little." He took just a little, then coughed violently, spilling a few drops from the cup. "Good God, man, what are your insides made of? That's volcano juice!" As his coughing subsided, a strangely saintlike expression appeared. "It does warm you up nicely inside, though, doesn't it?" He screwed up his face and his courage, and finished the cup in one gulp.

"Hey," said Padway. "Go easy. That isn't wine, you know."

"Oh, don't worry about me. Nothing makes me drunk."

Padway got out another cup and sat down. "Maybe you can tell me one thing that I haven't gotten straight yet. In my country we reckon years from the birth of Christ. When I asked a man, the day I arrived, what year it was, he said 1288 after the founding of the city. Now, can you tell me how many years before Christ Rome was founded? I've forgotten."

Thomasus took another slug of brandy and thought. "Seven hundred and fifty-four—no, 753. That means that this is the year of our Lord 535. That's the system the church uses. The Goths say the second year of Thiudahad's reign, and the Byzantines the first year of the consulship of Flavius Belisarius. Or the somethingth year of Justinian's *imperium*. I can see how it might confuse you." He drank some more. "This is a wonderful invention, isn't it?" He held his cup up and turned it this way and that. "Let's have some more. I think you'll make a success, Martinus."

"Thanks. I hope so."

"Wonderful invention. Course it'll be a success. Couldn't help being a success. A big success. Are You listening, God? Well, make sure my friend Martinus has a big success.

"I know a successful man when I see him, Martinus. Been picking them for years. That's how I'm such a success in the banking business. Success—success—let's drink to success. Beautiful success. Gorgeous success.

"I know what, Martinus. Let's go some place. Don't like drinking to success in this old ruin. You know, atmosphere. Some place where there's music. How much brandy have you got left? Good, bring the bottle along."

THE JOINT was in the theater district on the north side of the Capitoline. The "music" was furnished by a young woman who twanged a harp and sang songs in Calabrian dialect, which the cash customers seemed to find very funny.

"Let's drink to—" Thomasus started to say "success" for the thirtieth time, but changed his mind. "Say, Martinus, we'd better buy some of his lousy wine, or he'll have us thrown out. How does this stuff mix with wine?" At Padway's expression, he said: "Don't worry, Martinus, old friend, this is on me.

Haven't made a night of it in years. You know, family man." He winked and snapped his fingers for the waiter. When he had finally gotten through his little ceremony, he said: "Just a minute, Martinus, old friend, I see a man who owes me money. I'll be right back." He waddled unsteadily across the room.

A man at the next table asked Padway suddenly: "What's that stuff you and old one-eye have been drinking, friend?"

"Oh, just a foreign drink called brandy," said Padway uneasily.

"That's right, you're a foreigner, aren't you? I can tell by your accent." He screwed up his face, and then said: "I know; you're a Persian. I know a Persian accent."

"Not exactly," said Padway. "Farther away than that."

"That so? How do you like Rome?" The man had very large and very black eyebrows.

"Fine, so far," said Padway.

"Well, you haven't seen anything," said the man. "It hasn't been the same since the Goths came." He lowered his voice conspiratorially: "Mark my words, it won't be like this always, either!"

"You don't like the Goths?"

"No! Not with the persecution we have to put up with!"

"Persecution?" Padway raised his eyebrows.

"Religious persecution. We won't stand for it forever."

"I thought the Goths let everybody worship as they pleased."

"That's just it! We Orthodox are forced to stand around and watch Arians and Monophysites and Nestorians and Jews going about their business unmolested, as if they owned the country. If that isn't persecution, I'd like to know what is!"

"You mean that you're persecuted because the heretics and such are not?"

"Certainly, isn't that obvious? We won't stand— What's your religion, by the way?"

"Well," said Padway, "I'm what in my country is called a Congregationalist. That's the nearest thing to Orthodoxy that we have."

"Hm-m-m. So long as you're not one of these Maronites or Nestorians—"

"What's that about Nestorians?" said Thomasus, who had returned unobserved. "We who have the only logical view of the nature of the Son —that He was a man in whom the Father indwelt—"

"Nonsense!" snapped Eyebrows. "That's what you expect of half-baked amateur theologians. Our view—that of the dual nature of the Son—has been irrefutably shown—"

"Hear that, God? As if one person could have more than one nature—"

"You're all crazy!" rumbled a tall, sad-looking man with thin yellow hair, watery blue eyes, and a heavy accent. "We Arians abhor theological controversy, being sensible men. But if you want a sensible view of the nature of the Son—"

"You're a Goth?" barked Eyebrows tensely.

"No, I'm a Vandal, exiled from Africa. But as I was saying"—he began counting on his fingers— "either the Son was a man, or He was a god, or He was something in between. Well, now, we admit He wasn't a man. And there's only one God, so He wasn't a god. So He must have been—"

About that time things began to happen too fast for Padway to follow them all at once. Eyebrows jumped up and began yelling like

one possessed. Padway couldn't follow him, except to note that the term "infamous heretics" occurred about once per sentence. Yellow Hair roared back at him, and other men began shouting from various parts of the room: "Eat him up, barbarian!" "This is an Orthodox country, and those who don't like it can go back where they—" "Damned nonsense about dual natures! We Monophysites—" "I'm a Jacobite, and I can lick any man in the place!" "Let's throw all the heretics out!" "I'm a Eunomian, and I can lick any *two* men in the place!"

Padway saw something coming and ducked; the mug missed his head by an inch and a half. When he looked up the room was a blur of action. Eyebrows was holding the self-styled Jacobite by the hair and punching his face; Yellow Hair was swinging four feet of bench around his head and howling a Vandal battle song. Padway hit one champion of Orthodoxy in the middle; his place was immediately taken by another who hit Padway in the middle. Then they were overborne by a rush of men. As Padway struggled up through the pile of kicking, yelling humanity, like a swimmer striking for the surface, somebody got hold of his foot and tried to bite his toes off. As Padway was still wearing a pair of massive and practically indestructible English walking shoes, the biter got nowhere. So he shifted his attack to Padway's ankle. Padway yelped with pain, yanked his foot free, and kicked the biter in the face. The face yielded a little, and Padway wondered whether he'd broken a nose or a few teeth. He hoped he had.

The heretics seemed to be in a minority, that shrank as its members were beaten down and cast forth into darkness. Padway's eye caught the gleam of a knife blade, and he thought it was well past his bedtime. Not being a religious man, he had no desire to be whittled up in the cause of the single, dual, or any other nature. He located Thomasus, the Syrian, under a table. When he tried to drag him out, the banker shrieked with terror and hugged the tableleg. Padway finally got him untangled.

The yellow-haired Vandal was still swinging his bench. Padway shouted at him. The man couldn't have understood in the uproar, but his attention was attracted, and when Padway pointed at the door he got the idea. In a few seconds he had cleared a path, and the three stumbled out, pushed through the crowd that was beginning to gather outside, and ran. A yell behind them made them run faster, until they realized that it was Ajax, and slowed down to let him catch up.

They finally sat down on a park bench on the edge of the Field of Mars, only a few blocks from the Pantheon, where Padway had had his first sight of post-Imperial Rome. Thomasus, when he got his breath, said: "Martinus, why did you let me drink so much of that heathen drink? Oh, my head! If I hadn't been drunk, I'd have had more sense than to start a theological argument."

"I tried to slow you down," said Padway mildly, "but you—"

"I know, I know. But you should have prevented me from drinking so much, forcibly if necessary. My head! What will my wife say? I never want to see that lousy barbarian drink again! What did you do with the bottle, by the way?"

"It got lost in the scuffle. But there wasn't much left in it anyway." Padway turned to the Vandal. "I guess we owe you some

thanks for getting us out of there so quickly."

THE MAN pulled his drooping mustache. "I was glad to do it, friend. Religious argument is no occupation for decent people. Permit me; my name is Fritharik Staifan's son." He spoke slowly, fumbling for words occasionally. "Once I was counted a man of noble family. Now I am merely a poor wanderer. Life holds nothing for me any more." Padway saw a tear glistening in the moonlight.

"You said you were a Vandal?"

Fritharik sighed like a vacuum cleaner. "Yes, mine was one of the finest estates in Carthage, before the Greeks came. When King Gelimer ran away, and our army scattered, I escaped to Spain, and thence I came hither last year."

"What are you doing now?"

"Alas, I am not doing anything now. I had a job as bodyguard to a Roman patrician until last week. Think of it—a noble Vandal serving as bodyguard! But my employer got set on the idea of converting me to Orthodoxy. That," said Fritharik with dignity, "I would not allow. So here I am. When my money is gone, I don't know what will become of me. Perhaps I will kill myself. Nobody would care." He sighed some more, then said: "You aren't looking for a good, reliable bodyguard, are you?"

"Not just now," said Padway, "but I may be in a few weeks. Do you think you can postpone your suicide until then?"

"I don't know. It depends on how my money holds out. I have no sense about money. Being of noble birth, I never needed any. I don't know whether you'll ever see me alive again." He wiped his eyes on his sleeve.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake," said Thomasus, "there are plenty of things you could do."

"No," said Fritharik tragically. "You wouldn't understand, friend. There are considerations of honor. And anyway, what has life to offer me? Did you say you might be able to take me on later?" he asked Padway. Padway said yes, and gave him his address. "Very well, friend. I shall probably be in a nameless lonely grave before two weeks have passed. But, if not, I'll be around."

III.

AT THE END of the week, Padway was gratified not only by the appearance of the row of bottles on the shelf, but by the state of his finances. Counting the five solidi for the first month's rent on the house, the six more that had gone into his apparatus, and Hannibal's wages and his own living expenses, he still had over thirty of his fifty borrowed solidi left. The first two items wouldn't recur for a couple of weeks, anyway.

"How much are you going to charge for that stuff?" asked Thomasus.

Padway thought. "It's a luxury article, obviously. If we can get some of the better-class restaurants to stock it, I don't see why we shouldn't get two solidi per bottle. At least until somebody discovers our secret and begins competing with us."

Thomasus rubbed his hands together. "At that rate, you could practically pay back your loan with the proceeds of the first week's sales. But I'm in no hurry; it might be better to reinvest them in the business. We'll see how things turn out. I think I know the restaurant we should start with."

Padway experienced a twinge of

dread at the idea of trying to sell the restaurateur the idea. He was not a born salesman, and he knew it. He asked: "How should I go about getting him to buy some of the stuff? I'm not very familiar with your Roman business methods, you know."

"That's all right. He won't refuse, because he owes me money, and he's behind in his interest payments. I'll introduce you."

It came about as the banker had said: the restaurant owner, a puffy man named Gaius Attalus, glowered a bit at first. The entrepreneur fed him a little brandy by way of a sample, and he warmed up. Thomasus had to ask God whether He was listening only twice before Attalus agreed to Padway's price for half a dozen bottles.

Padway, who had been suffering from one of his periodic fits of depression all morning, glowed visibly as they emerged from the restaurant, his pockets pleasantly heavy with gold.

"I think," said Thomasus, "you had better hire that Vandal chap, if you're going to have money around the house. And I'd spend some of it on a good strong box."

So when Hannibal Scipio told Padway: "There's a tall, gloomy-looking bird outside who says you said to come see you," he had the Vandal sent in and hired him almost at once.

When Padway asked Fritharik what he proposed to do his bodyguarding with, Fritharik looked embarrassed, chewed his mustache, and finally said: "I had a fine sword, but I hocked it to keep alive. It was all that stood between me and a nameless grave. Perhaps I shall end in one yet," he sighed.

"Stop thinking about graves for a while," snapped Padway, "and tell me how much you need to get your sword back."

"Forty solidi."

"*Whew!* Is it made of solid gold, or what?"

"No. But it's good Damascus steel, and has gems in the handle. It was all that I saved from my beautiful estate in Africa. You have no idea what a fine place I had—"

"Now, now!" said Padway. "For Heaven's sake don't start crying! Here's five solidi; go buy yourself the best sword you can with that. I'm taking it out of your salary. If you want to save up to get this bejeweled cheese knife of yours back, that's your business." So Fritharik departed, and shortly thereafter reappeared with a secondhand sword clanking at his side.

"It's the best I could do for the money," he explained. "The dealer claimed it was Damascus work, but you can tell that the Damascus marks on the blade are fakes. This local steel is soft, but I suppose it will have to do. When I had my beautiful estate in Africa, the finest steel was none too good." He sighed gustily.

Padway examined the sword, which was a typical sixth century *spatha* with a broad single-edged thirty-inch blade. It was, in fact, much like a Scotch broadsword without the fancy knuckle-guard. He also noticed that Fritharik Staifan's son, though as mournful as ever, stood straighter and walked with a more determined stride when wearing the sword. He must, Padway thought, feel practically naked without it.

Padway decided to knock off on his fifth Sunday in Rome. For a month he had been working incessantly all day and most of the night.

He approached the library with

much the same visceral tingle that a lover gets from the imminence of a meeting with his beloved. Nor was he disappointed. He felt like shouting when a brief nosing about the shelves showed him Berosus' "Chaldean History," the complete works of Livius, Tacitus' "History of the Conquest of Britain," and Cassiodorus' recently published "Gothic History" complete. Here was stuff for which more than one twentieth century historian or archaeologist would cheerfully commit murder.

For a few minutes he simply dithered, like the proverbial ass between two haystacks. Then he decided that Cassiodorus would have the most valuable information to impart, as it dealt with an environment in which he himself was living. So he lugged the big volumes out and set to work. It was hard work, too, even for a man who knew Latin. The books were written in a semicursive minuscule hand with all the words run together. The incredibly wordy and affected style of the writer didn't bother him as it would have if he had been reading English; he was after facts.

"Excuse me, sir," said the librarian, "but is that tall barbarian with the yellow mustache your man?"

"I suppose so," said Padway. "What is it?"

"He's gone to sleep in the Oriental section, and he's snoring so that the readers are complaining."

"I'll tend to him," said Padway.

He went over and awakened Fritharik. "Can't you read?" he asked.

"No," said Fritharik quite simply. "Why should I? When I had my beautiful estate in Africa, there was no occasion—"

"Yes, I know all about your beautiful estate, old man. But you'll have to learn to read, or else do your snoring outside."

So Fritharik went out, somewhat huffily, muttering to himself in his own East-German dialect.

Padway and Thomasus the Syrian sat, along with several hundred naked Romans, in the steam room of the Baths of Diocletian. The banker looked around and leered: "I hear that in the old days they let the women into these baths, too. Right mixed in with the men. Of course that was in pagan times; there's nothing like that now."

"Christian morality, no doubt," said Padway dryly.

"Yes," chuckled Thomasus. "We moderns are *such* a moral people. You know what the Empress Theodora used to complain about?"

"Yes," said Padway, and told Thomasus what the empress used to complain about.

"Damn it!" cried Thomasus. "Every time I have a dirty story, either you've heard it, or you know a better one."

Padway didn't see fit to tell the banker that he had read that bit of dirt in a book that hadn't yet been written, namely the "Anecdotes," by Procopius of Caesarea.

Thomasus went on: "I've got a letter from my cousin Antiochus in Naples. He's in the shipping business. He has news from Constantinople." He paused impressively. "War."

"Between us and the Empire?"

"Between the Goths and the Empire, anyway. They've been carrying on mysterious dickerings ever since Amalasuentha was killed. Thiudahad has tried to duck responsibility for the murder, but I think our old poet-king has come to the end of his rope."

Padway said: "Watch Dalmatia and Sicily. Before the end of the year—" He stopped.

"Leggo!" snapped the city official, "he's our prisoner."
"Leggo yourself! Sorcery's a state offense; he's ours."

"Doing a bit of soothsaying?"

"No, just an opinion."

The good eye sparkled at Padway through the steam, very black and very intelligent. "Martinus, just who are you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, there's something about you —I don't know how to put it—not just your funny way of putting things. You produce the most astonishing bits of knowledge, like a magician pulling rabbits out of his cap. And when I try to pump you about your own country or how you came hither, you change the subject."

"Well—" said Padway, wondering just how big a lie to risk. Then he thought of the perfect answer—a truthful one that Thomasus would be sure to misconstrue. "You see, I left my own country in a great hurry."

"Oh. For reasons of health, eh? I don't blame you for being cagy in that case." Thomasus winked.

When they got back to Padway's house, they entered his big workshop to find Fritharik and Hannibal glaring at one another like a couple of dogs who dislike each other's smell. Hannibal's two assistants were looking on with their backs to the door; thus nobody observed the entrance of Padway and Thomasus.

Hannibal snarled: "What do you mean, you big cotton-head? You lie around all day, too lazy to turn over, and then you dare criticize me—"

"All I said," growled the Vandal in his clumsy, deliberate Latin, "was that the next time I caught you doing that, I'd report it. Well, I did, and I'm going to."

"I'll slit your lousy throat if you do!" yelled Hannibal.

Whipping out a dagger, Hannibal lunged at Fritharik. He moved with incredible speed, but he used the instinctive but unsound overhand stab. Fritharik, who was unarmed, caught his wrist with a smack of flesh on flesh, then lost it as Hannibal dug his point into the Vandal's forearm.

When Hannibal swung his arm up for another stab, Padway arrived and caught the arm. He hauled the little man away from his opponent, and immediately had to hang on for dear life to keep from being stabbed himself. Hannibal was shrieking in Sicilian patois and foaming a little at the mouth. Padway saw that he wanted to kill him. He jerked his face back as the dirty fingernails of Hannibal's left hand raked his nose, which was a target hard to miss.

Then there was a thump, and Hannibal collapsed, dropping his dagger. Padway let him slide to the floor, and saw that Nerva, the older of the two assistants, was holding a stool by one leg. It had all happened so quickly that Fritharik was just bending over to pick up a short piece of board for a weapon, and Thomasus and Carbo, the other workman, were still standing just inside the door.

Padway said to Nerva: "I think you're the man for my next foreman. What's this about, Fritharik?"

Fritharik didn't answer; he stalked toward the unconscious Hannibal with plain and fancy murder in his face.

"That's enough, Fritharik!" said Padway sharply. "No more rough stuff, or you're fired, too." He planted himself in front of the intended victim. "What was he doing?"

The Vandal came to himself. "He was stealing bits of copper from stock and selling them. I tried to get him to stop without telling you; you know how it is if your fellow employees think you're spying on them. Please, boss, let me have one

whack at him. I may be a poor exile, but no little—"

Padway refused permission. Thomasus suggested swearing out a complaint and having Hannibal arrested; Padway said no, he didn't want to get mixed up with the law if he didn't have to. He did allow Frithark to send Hannibal, when the Sicilian came to, out the front door with a mighty kick in the fundament. Exit villain, sneering, thought Padway as he watched the ex-foreman slink off.

Fritharik said: "I think that was a mistake, Martinus. I could have sunk his body in the Tiber without anybody's knowing. He'll make trouble for us."

Padway suspected that the last statement was correct. But he merely said: "We'd better bind your arm up. Your whole sleeve is blood-soaked."

IV.

Padway had resolved not to let anything distract him from the task of assuring himself a livelihood. Until that was accomplished, he didn't intend to stick his neck out by springing gunpowder or the law of gravitation on the unsuspecting Romans.

But the banker's remark about war reminded him that he was, after all, living in a political and cultural as well as an economic world. He had never, in his other life, paid more attention to current events than he had to. And in postimperial Rome, with no newspapers or electrical communication, it was even easier to forget about things outside one's immediate orbit.

He was living in the twilight of western classical civilization. The Age of Faith, better known as the Dark Ages, was closing down. Europe would be in darkness, from a scientific and technological aspect, for nearly a thousand years. That aspect was, to Padway's naturally prejudiced mind, the most, if not the only, important aspect of a civilization. Of course, the people among whom he was living had no conception of what was happening to them. The process was too slow to observe directly, even over the span of a lifetime. They took their environment for granted, and even bragged about their modernity.

So what? Could one man change the course of history to the extent of preventing this interregnum? One man had changed the course of history before. Maybe. A Carlylean would say yes. A Tolstoyan or Marxian would say no; the environment fixes the pattern of a man's accomplishments and throws up the man to fit that pattern.

How would one man go about it? Invention was the mainspring of technological development. But even in his own time, the lot of the professional inventor had been hard, without the handicap of a powerful and suspicious ecclesiasticism. And how much could he accomplish by simply "inventing," even if he escaped the unwelcome attentions of the pious? The arts of distilling and metal rolling were launched, no doubt, and so were Arabic numerals. But there was so much to be done, and only one lifetime to do it in.

What then? Business? He was already in it; the upper classes were contemptuous of it; and he was not naturally a businessman, though he could hold his own well enough in competition with these sixth-century yaps. Politics? In an age when victory went to the sharpest knife, and no moral rules of conduct were observable? *Br-r-r-r!*

How to prevent darkness from falling?

The empire might have held together longer if it had had better means of communication. But the empire, at least in the west, was hopelessly smashed, with Italy, Gaul, and Spain under the muscular thumbs of their barbarian "garrisons."

The answer was: *Rapid communication and the multiple record*—that is, printing. Not even the most diligently destructive barbarian can extirpate the written word from a culture wherein the *minimum* edition of most books is fifteen hundred copies. There are just too many books.

So he would be a printer.

"Good morning, my dear Martinus," said Thomasus. "How is the copper-rolling business?"

"So-so. The local smiths are pretty well stocked with strip, and not many of the shippers are interested in paying my prices for such a heavy commodity. But I think I'll clean up that last note in a few weeks."

"I'm glad to hear that. What will you do then?"

"That's what I came to see you about. Who's publishing books in Rome now?"

"Books? Books? Nobody, unless you count the copyists who replace worn-out copies for the libraries. There are a couple of bookstores down in the Agiletum, but their stock is all imported. The last man who tried to run a publishing business in Rome went broke years ago. You're not thinking of going into it, I hope?"

"Yes, I am. I'll make money at it, too."

"What? You're crazy, Martinus. Don't consider it. I don't want to see you go broke after making such a fine start."

"I shan't go broke. But I'll need some capital to start."

"What? Another loan? But I've just told you that nobody can make money publishing in Rome. It's a proven fact. I won't lend you an as on such a harebrained scheme. How much did you think you'd need?"

"About five hundred solidi."

"Ai, ai! You've gone mad, my boy! What would you need such a lot for? All you have to do is buy or hire a couple of scribes—"

Padway grinned. "Oh, no. That's the point. It takes a scribe months to copy out a work like Cassiodorus' 'Gothic History' by hand, and that's only one copy. No wonder a work like that costs fifty solidi per copy! I can build a machine that will turn out five hundred or a thousand copies in a few weeks, to retail for five or ten solidi. But it will take time and money to build the machine and teach an operator how to run it."

"But that's real money! God, are You listening? Well, please make my misguided young friend listen to reason! For the last time, Martinus, I won't consider it! How does the machine work?"

If Padway had known the travail that was in store for him, he might have been less confident about the possibilities of starting a printshop in a world that knew neither printing presses, type, printer's ink, or paper. Writing ink was available, and so were papyrus and vellum. But it didn't take Padway long to decide that these would be impractical for his purposes.

His press, seemingly the most formidable job, proved the easiest. A carpenter down in the warehouse district promised to knock one together for him in a few weeks, though he manifested a not-unnatural curi-

osity as to what Padway proposed to do with the contraption. Padway wouldn't tell him.

"It's not like any press I ever saw," said the man. "It doesn't look like a felt press. *I* know! You're the city's new executioner, and this is a newfangled torture instrument! Why didn't you want to tell me, boss? It's a perfectably respectable trade! But say, how about giving me a pass to the torture chamber the first time you use it? I want to be sure my work holds up, you know!"

For a bed they used a piece sawn off the top of a section of a broken marble column and mounted on wheels. All Padway's instincts revolted at this use of a monument of antiquity, but he consoled himself with the thought that one column more or less mattered less than the art of printing.

For type, he contracted with a seal cutter to cut him a set of brass types. He had, at first, been appalled to discover that he would need ten or twelve thousand of the little things, since he could hardly build a type-casting machine, and would therefore have to print directly from the types. He had hoped to be able to print in Greek and Gothic as well as in Latin, but the Latin types alone set him back a round two hundred solidi. And the first sample set that the seal cutter ran off had the letters facing the wrong way and had to be melted up again. The type was what a twentieth-century printer would have called fourteen-point Gothic, and an engraver would have called sans-serif. With such big type he wouldn't be able to get much copy on a page, but it would at least, he hoped, be legible.

For paper, he got hold of a felter and told him that he wanted him to chop up a few pounds of white cloth and make them into the thinnest felt that anybody had ever heard of. The felter dutifully produced a sheet of what looked like exceptionally thick and fuzzy blotting paper. Padway patiently insisted on finer breaking up of the cloth, on a brief boiling before felting, and on pressing after. As he went out of the shop he saw the felter tap his forehead significantly. But after many trials the man presented him with a paper not much worse for writing than a twentieth-century paper towel.

Then came the heartbreaking part. A drop of ink applied to this paper spread out with the alacrity of a picnic party that has discovered a rattlesnake in their midst. So Padway told the felter to make up ten more sheets, and into the mush from which each was made to introduce one common substance—soap, olive oil, and so forth. At this point the felter threatened to quit, and had to be appeased by a raise in price. Padway was vastly relieved to discover that a little clay mixed with the pulp made all the difference between a fair writing paper and an impossible one.

He was fortunate in knowing that printer's ink was based on linseed oil and lampblack. It was no great trick to buy a bag of flaxseed and run it through a set of rolls like those he used for copper rolling, and to rig up a contraption consisting of an oil lamp, a water-filled bowl suspended and revolved over it, and a scraper for removing the lampblack. The only thing wrong with the resulting ink was that it wouldn't print. That is, it either made no impression or came off the type in shapeless gobs.

Padway was getting nervous about his finances; his five hundred solidi were getting low, and this seemed a cruel joke. His air of dis-

couragement became so obvious that he caught his workers remarking on it behind their hands. But he grimly set out to experiment on his ink. Sure enough, he found that with a little soap in it, it would work fairly well.

It was now April, 536. Sicily had fallen to General Belisarius in December. Padway had heard this weeks after it happened. Except for business errands, he had hardly been outside his house in four months in his desperate anxiety to get his press going. And except for his workers and his business contacts he knew practically nobody in Rome, except for a speaking acquaintance with the librarians and two of Thomasus' banker friends, Ebenezer the Jew and Vardan the Armenian.

The day the press was finally ready he called his workers together and said: "I suppose you know that this is likely to be an important day for us. Fritharik will give you each a small bottle of brandy to take home when you leave. And the first man who drops a hammer or anything on those little brass letters gets fired. I hope none of you do, because you've done a good job and I'm proud of you. That's all."

"Well, well," said Thomasus, "that's splendid. I always knew you'd get your machine to run. Said so right from the start. What are you going to print? The 'Gothic History'? That would flatter the Pretorian prefect, no doubt."

"No. That would take months to run off, especially as my men are new at the job. I'm starting off with a little alphabet book. You know, A is for *asinus* (ass), B is for *braccae* (breeches), and so on."

"That sounds like a good idea. But, Martinus, can't you let your men handle it, and take a rest? You look as if you hadn't had a good night's sleep in months."

"I haven't, to tell the truth. But I can't leave; every time something goes wrong I have to be there to fix it. And I've got to find outlets for this first book. Schoolmasters and such people. I have to do everything myself, sooner or later. Also, I have an idea for another kind of publication."

"What? Don't tell me you're going to start another wild scheme—"

"Now, now, don't get excited, Thomasus. This is a weekly booklet of news."

"Listen, Martinus, don't overreach yourself. You'll get the scribes' guild down on you. As it is, I wish you'd tell me more about yourself. You're the town's great mystery, you know. Everybody asks me about you."

"You just tell them I'm the most uninteresting bore you ever met in your life."

There were only a little over a hundred free-lance scribes in Rome. Padway disarmed any hostility they might have had for him by the curious expedient of enlisting them as reporters. He made a standing offer of a couple of sesterces per story for acceptable accounts of news events. When he came to assemble the copy for his first issue, he found that some drastic censorship was necessary. For instance, one story read:

Our depraved and licentious City Governor, Count Honorius, was seen early Wednesday morning being pursued down Broad Way by a young woman with a butcher's cleaver. Because this cowardly wretch was not encumbered by a decent minimum of clothing, he outdistanced his pursuer. This is the fourth time in a month that the wicked and corrupt count has created a scandal by his conduct with women. It is rumored that King

Thiudahad will be petitioned to remove him by a committee of the outraged fathers of daughters whom he has dishonored. It is to be hoped that the next time the diabolical count is chased with a cleaver, his pursuer will catch him.

Somebody, thought Padway, doesn't *like* our illustrious count. He didn't know Honorius, but whether the story was true or not, there was no free-press clause in the Italian constitution between Padway and the city's torture chambers.

So the first eight-page issue said nothing about young women with cleavers. It had a lot of relatively innocuous news items, one short poem contributed by a scribe who fancied himself a second Ovid, an editorial by Padway in which he said briefly that he hoped the Romans would find his paper useful, and a short article—also by Padway—on the nature and habits of the elephant.

Padway called his paper *Tempora Romæ* and offered it at ten sesterces, about the equivalent of fifty cents. He was surprised when not only did the first issue sell out, but Fritharik was busy for three days turning away from his door people who wanted copies that were not to he had. Despite Padway's caution, as the paper's circulation boomed, Roman patricians who didn't understand the philosophy of a free press sometimes made life exciting for his newsboys.

It was about the end of April when Nevitta Gummund's son called on Padway at the latter's house. When Fritharik showed him in, he slapped Padway on the back so hard as to send him halfway across the room. "Well, well!" he bellowed. "Somebody showed me one of those little books you put out every week, and I remembered your name. So I thought I'd look you up. Say, you certainly got yourself established in record time, for a stranger. Pretty smart young man, eh? Hah-hah!"

"Would you like to look around?" invited Padway. "Only I'll have to ask you to keep my methods confidential. There's no law here protecting ideas, so I have to keep my things secret until I'm willing to make them public property."

"Sure, you can trust me. I wouldn't understand how these machines work, anyhow." In the machine shop he was fascinated by the spectacle of a crude wire-drawing machine that Padway had rigged up. "Isn't that pretty?" he said, picking up a roll of brass wire. "I'd like to buy some for my wife. It would make nice bracelets and earrings and things."

Padway hadn't anticipated that use of his produce, but he said he'd have some ready for delivery in a week.

"Where do you get your power?" asked Nevitta.

Padway showed him the horse in the back yard walking around a shaft.

"Shouldn't think a horse would be efficient," said the Goth. "You could get a lot more power out of a couple of husky slaves. That is, if your driver knew how to use his whip. Hah-hah!"

"Oh, no," said Padway. "Not *this* horse. Notice anything about his harness?"

"Well, yes, it *is* peculiar. But I don't know just what's wrong with it."

"It's that collar over his neck. You people make your horses pull against a strap around the throat. So every time he pulls, the strap cuts into his windpipe and shut off the poor animal's breath. Naturally

he can't pull very hard. But that collar, now, puts the load on his shoulders. If you were going to pull a load, you wouldn't hitch a rope around your neck to pull with, would you?"

"Well," said Nevitta dubiously, "maybe you're right. But we've been using our kind of harness for a long, long time, and I don't know whether I'd care to change."

Padway shrugged. "Any time you want one of these outfits, you can get it from Metellus, on the Appian Way just south of the Temple of Virtue. He made this one to my specifications. I'm not making them myself; I have too much else to do."

"I guess you do! But you don't want to work *all* the time. How about coming out to the Flaminian racetrack with me today and losing a few solidi? Then come on up to the farm overnight."

"I'd like to a lot, but I have to put the *Times* to bed this afternoon."

"Put to bed?" asked Nevitta.

Padway explained.

Nevitta said: "I see. Hah-hah. Tomorrow for supper, then."

"How shall I get there?"

"You haven't a saddle horse? I'll send Hermann down with one tomorrow afternoon. But mind, I don't want to get him back with wings growing out of his shoulders!"

"It might attract attention," said Padway solemnly. "And you'd have a hell of a time catching him if he didn't want to be bridled."

So the next afternoon Padway, in a new pair of rawhide Byzantine jack boots, set out with Hermann up the Flaminian Way. The Roman Campagna, he noted, was still fairly prosperous farming country. He wondered how long it would take for it to become the desolate, malarial plain of the Middle Ages.

"How were the races?" he asked.

Hermann, it seemed, knew very little Latin, though that little was still better than Padway's Gothic. "Oh, my boss . . . he terrible angry. He talk . . . you know . . . hot sport. But hate lose money. Lose fifty sesterces on horse. Make noise like . . . you know . . . lion with gut-ache."

At the farmhouse Padway met Nevitta's wife, a pleasant, plump woman who spoke no Latin, and his eldest son, Dagalaif, a Gothic *scaio*, or marshal, home on vacation. Supper fully bore out the stories that Padway had heard about Gothic appetites. He was agreeably surprised to drink some fairly good beer, after the bilge water that went by that name in Rome.

"I've got some wine, if you prefer it," said Nevitta.

"Thanks, but I'm getting a little tired of Italian wine. The Roman writers talk a lot about their different kinds, but it all tastes alike to me."

"That's the way I feel. Of course, if you really *want* some, I have some perfumed Greek wine."

Padway shuddered.

Nevitta grinned. "That's the way I feel. Any man who'd put perfume in his liquor probably swishes when he walks. I only keep the stuff for my Greek friends. Like those physicians I told you about. That reminds me, you were right about keeping the dogs outside. I don't get the wheezes any more."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"That was one way I knew you really were a smart young man. Say, Martinus, maybe you have some inside information on how the war will go."

Padway shrugged. "All I know is what everybody else knows. I haven't a private line—I mean a

private channel of information to Heaven. If you want a guess, I'd say that Belisarius would invade Bruttium this summer and besiege Naples about August. He won't have a large force, but he'll be infernally hard to beat."

Dagalaif said: "Huh! We'll eat him up all right. A handful of Greeks won't get very far against the united Gothic nation."

"That's what the Vandals thought," answered Padway dryly.

"*Aiw,*" said Dagalaif. "But we won't make the mistakes the Vandals made."

"I don't know, son," said Nevitta. "It seems to me we are making them already—or others just as bad. This king of ours—all he's good for is hornswoggling his neighbors out of land and writing Latin poetry. And digging around in libraries. It would be better if we had an illiterate one, like Theoderik. Of course," he added apologetically, "I admit I can read and write. My old man came from Pannonia with Theoderik, and he was always talking about the sacred duty of the Goths to preserve Roman civilization from savages like the Franks. He was determined that I should have a Latin education if it killed me. I admit I've found my education useful. But in the next few months it'll be more important for our leader to know how to lead a charge than to say *amo-amas-amat.*"

V.

Padway returned to Rome in the best of humor. Nevitta was the first person, besides Thomasus the Syrian, who had asked him to his house. And Padway, despite his somewhat cool exterior, was a sociable fellow at heart. He was, in fact, so elated that he dismounted and handed the reins of the borrowed horse to Hermann without noticing the three tough-looking parties leaning against the new fence in front of the old house on Long Street. When he headed for the gate, the largest of the three, a black-bearded man, stepped in front of him. The man was holding a sheet of paper—real paper, no doubt from the felter to whom Padway had taught the art—in front of him and reading out loud to himself: "—medium height, brown hair and eyes, large nose. Speaks with an accent." He looked up sharply. "Are you Martinus Paduei?"

"*Sic. Quis est?*"

"You're under arrest. Will you come along quietly?"

"*What?* Who— What for—"

"Order of the munipical prefect. Sorcery."

"But . . . but— *Hey!* You can't—"

"I said *quietly.*"

The other two men had moved up on each side of Padway, and each took an arm and started to walk him along the street. When he resisted, a short bludgeon appeared in the hand of one. Padway looked around frantically. Hermann was already out of sight. Fritharik was not to be seen; no doubt he was snoring as usual. Padway filled his lungs to shout; the man on his right tightened his grip and raised the bludgeon threateningly. Padway didn't shout.

They marched him down the Argiletum to the old jail below the Record Office on the Capitoline. He was still in somewhat of a daze as the clerk demanded his name, age, and address. All he could think of was that he had heard somewhere that you were entitled to telephone your lawyer before being locked up. And that information seemed hardly useful in the present circumstances.

A small, snapping Italian who had been lounging on a bench got up. "What's this, a sorcery case involving a foreigner? Sounds like a national case to me."

"Oh, no, it isn't," said the clerk. "You national officers have authority in Rome only in mixed Roman-Gothic cases. This man isn't a Goth; says he's an American, whatever that is."

"Yes, it is! Read your regulations. The pretorian prefect's office has jurisdiction in all capital cases involving foreigners. If you have a sorcery complaint, you turn it and the prisoner over to us. Come on, now." The little man moved possessively toward Padway.

The clerk said: "Don't be a fool. Think you're going to drag him clear up to Ravenna for interrogation? We've got a perfectly good torture chamber here."

"I'm only doing my duty," snapped the state policeman. He grabbed Padway's arm and started to haul him toward the door. "Come along now, sorcerer. We'll show you some real, up-to-date torture at Ravenna. These Roman cops don't know anything."

"Are you crazy?" yelled the clerk. He jumped up and grabbed Padway's other arm; so did the black-bearded man who had arrested him. The state policeman pulled and so did the other two.

"Hey!" yelled Padway. But the assorted functionaries were too engrossed in their tug-of-war to notice.

The state policeman shouted in a painfully penetrating voice: "Justinius, run and tell the adjutant prefect that these municipal scum are trying to withhold a prisoner from us!" A man ran out the door.

Another door opened, and a fat, sleepy-looking man came in. "What's this?" he squeaked.

The clerk and the municipal policemen straightened up to attention, releasing Padway. The state policeman immediately resumed hauling him toward the door; the local cops abandoned their etiquette and grabbed him again. They all shouted at once at the fat man. Padway gathered that he was the municipal *commentariensius*, or police chief.

At that instant two more municipal policemen came in with a thin, ragged prisoner. They entered into the dispute with true Italian fervor, which meant using both hands. The ragged prisoner promptly darted out the door; his captors didn't notice his absence for a full minute.

They then began shouting at each other: "What did you let him go for?" "You brass-bound idiot, you're the one who let him go!"

THE MAN called Justinius came back with an elegant person who announced himself as the *corniculatis*, or adjutant prefect. This individual waved a perfumed handkerchief at the struggling group and said: "Let him go, you chaps. Yes, you, too, Sulla." (This was the state policeman.) "There won't be anything left of him to interrogate if you keep that up."

From the way the others in the now-crowded room quieted, Padway guessed that the adjutant prefect was a pretty big shot.

The adjutant prefect asked a few questions, then said: "I'm sorry, my dear old *commentariensius*, but I'm fraid he's our man."

"Not yet he isn't," squeaked the chief. "You fellows can't just walk in here and grab a prisoner any time you feel like it. It would mean my job to let you have him."

The adjutant prefect yawned.

"Dear, dear, you're *such* a bore. You forget that I represent the pretorian prefect, who represents the king, and if I order you to hand the prisoner over, you hand him over and that's the end of it. I so order you, now."

"Go ahead and order. You'll have to take him by force, and I've got more force here than you have." The chief beamed Billikenlike and twiddled his thumbs. "Clodianus, go fetch our illustrious city governor, if he's not too busy. We'll see whether we have authority over our own jail." The clerk departed. "Of course," the chief continued, "we *might* use Solomon's method."

"You mean cut him in two?" asked the adjutant prefect.

"That's it. That would be funny, wouldn't it? Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!" The chief laughed shrilly until the tears ran down his face. "Would you prefer the head end or the legs end? Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!" He rocked on his seat.

The other municipal officers dutifully laughed, also; the adjutant prefect permitted himself a wan, bored smile. Padway thought the chief's humor in questionable taste.

Eventually the clerk returned with the city governor. Count Honorius wore a tunic with the two purple stripes of a Roman senator, and walked with such a carefully measured tread that Padway wondered if his footsteps hadn't been laid out ahead of time with chalk marks. He had a square jaw and all the warmth of expression of a snapping turtle.

"What," he asked in a voice like a steel file, "is this all about? Quick, now. I'm a busy man." As he spoke, the little wattle under his jaw wobbled in a way that reminded Padway more than ever of a snapper.

The chief and the adjutant prefect gave their versions. The clerk dragged out a couple of law books; the three executive officers put their heads together and talked in low tones, turning pages rapidly and pointing to passages.

Finally the adjutant prefect gave in. He yawned elaborately. "Oh, well, it would be a dreadful bore to have to drag him up to Ravenna, anyway. Especially as the mosquito season will be starting there shortly. Glad to have seen you, my lord count." He bowed to Honorius, nodded casually to the chief, and departed.

Honorius said: "Now that we have him, what's to be done with him? Let's see that complaint."

The clerk dug out a paper and gave it to the count.

"Hm-m-m. '—and, furthermore, that the said Martinus Paduei did most wickedly and feloniously consort with the Evil One, who taught him the diabolical arts of magic wherewith he has been jeopardizing the welfare of the citizens of the city of Rome—signed, Hannibal Scipio of Palermo.' Wasn't this Hannibal Scipio a former associate of yours or something?"

"Yes, my lord count," said Padway, and explained the circumstances of his parting with the foreman. "If it's my printing press that he's referring to, I can easily show that it's a simple mechanical device, no more magical than one of your water clocks."

"Hm-m-m," said Honorius, "that may or may not be true." He looked through narrowed eyes at Padway. "These new enterprises of yours have prospered pretty well, haven't they?" His faint smile reminded Padway of a fox dreaming of unguarded henroosts.

"Yes and no, my lord. I have made a little money, but I've put most of it back in the business. So

I haven't more cash than I need for day-to-day expenses."

"Too bad," said Honorius. "It looks as though we'd have to let the case go through."

PADWAY was getting more and more nervous under that penetrating scrutiny, but he put up a bold front. "Oh, my lord, I don't think you have a case. If I may say so, it would be most unfortunate for your dignity to let the case come to trial."

"So? I'm afraid, my good man, that you don't know what expert interrogators we have. You'll have admitted all sorts of things by the time they finish . . . ah . . . questioning you."

"Um-m-m. My lord, I said I didn't have much *cash*. But I have an idea that I think might interest you."

"That's better. Lutetius, may I use your private office?"

Without waiting for an answer, Honorius marched to the office, jerking his head to Padway to follow. The chief looked after them sourly, obviously resenting the loss of his share of the swag.

In the chief's office, Honorius turned on Padway. "You weren't proposing to *bribe* your governor by chance, were you?" he asked coldly.

"Well . . . uh . . . now not exactly—"

The count shot his head forward. "How much?" he snapped. "And what's it in—jewels?"

Padway sighed with relief. "Please, my lord, not so fast. It'll take a bit of explaining."

"Your explanation had better be good."

"It's this way, my lord: I'm just a poor stranger in Rome, and naturally I have to depend on my wits for a living. The only really valuable thing I have is those wits. But, with reasonably kind treatment, they can be made to pay a handsome return."

"Get to the point, young man."

"You have a law against limited-liability corporations in other than public enterprises, haven't you?"

Honorius rubbed his chin. "We did have once. I don't know what its status is, now that the senate's authority is limited to the city. I don't think the Goths have made any regulations on that subject. Why?"

"Well, if you could get the senate to pass an amendment to that old law—I don't think it would be necessary, but it would look better—I could show you how you and a few other deserving senators could benefit handsomely from the organization and operation of such a company."

Honorius stiffened. "Young man, that's a miserable sort of offer. You ought to know that the dignity of a patrician forbids him to engage in trade."

"You wouldn't engage in it, my lord. You'd be the stockholders."

"We'd be the what?"

Padway explained the operation of a stock corporation.

Honorius rubbed his chin again. "Yes, I see where something might be made of that plan. What sort of company did you have in mind?"

"A company for the transmission of information over long distances much more rapidly than a messenger can travel. In my country they'd call it a semaphore telegraph. The company gets its revenue from tolls on private messages. Of course, it wouldn't hurt if you could get a subsidy from the royal treasury, on the ground that the institution was valuable for national defense."

Honorius thought a while. Then he said: "I won't commit myself now; I shall have to think about the matter and sound out my friends. In the meantime, you will, of course, remain in Lutetius' custody here."

Padway grinned. "My lord count, your daughter is getting married next week, isn't she?"

"What of it?"

"You want a nice write-up of the wedding in my paper, don't you? A list of distinguished guests, a wood-cut picture of the bride, and so forth."

"Hm-m-m. I shouldn't mind that; no."

"Well then, you'd better not hold me, or I shan't be able to get the paper out. It would be a pity if such a gala event missed the news because the publisher was in jail at the time."

Honorius rubbed his chin and smiled thinly. "For a barbarian, you're not as stupid as one would expect. I'll have you released."

"Many thanks, my lord. I might add that I shall be able to write much more glowing paragraphs after that complaint has been dismissed. We creative workers, you know—"

When Padway was out of earshot of the jail, he indulged in a long "*Whew!*" He was sweating, and not with the heat, either. It was a good thing that none of the officials noticed how near he had been to collapse from sheer terror.

As soon as he had put his establishment in order, he went into a huddle with Thomasus. He was properly prepared when the procession of five sedan chairs, bearing Honorius and four other senators, crawled up Long Street to his place. The senators seemed not only willing but eager to lay their money on the line, especially after they saw the beautiful stock certificates that Padway had printed. But they didn't seem to have quite Padway's idea of how to run a corporation.

One of them poked him in the ribs and grinned. "My dear Martinus, you're not *really* going to put up all those silly signal towers and things?"

"Well," said Padway cautiously, "that was the idea."

The senator winked. "Oh, I understand that you'll have to put up a couple to fool the middle class, so we can sell our stock at a profit. But *we* know it's all a fake, don't we? You couldn't make anything with your signaling scheme in a thousand years."

Padway didn't bother to argue with him. He also didn't bother to explain the true object of having Thomasus the Syrian, Ebenezer the Jew, and Vardan the Armenian each take eighteen percent of the stock. The senators might have been interested in knowing that these three bankers had agreed ahead of time to hold their stock and vote as Padney instructed, thereby giving him, with fifty-four percent of the stock, complete control of the corporation.

Padway had every intention of making his telegraph company a success, starting with a line of towers from Naples to Rome to Ravenna, and tying its operation in with that of his paper. He soon ran into an elementary difficulty: If he wanted to keep expenses down to somewhere within sight of income, he needed telescopes, to make possible a wide spacing of the towers. So he made some clay models of lenses, and had a lapidary grind and polish them up in glass.

He also hired a Roman freedman of Greek parentage, named George Menandrus, and trained him to edit the Rome *Times*. Menandrus was a quick, cheerful fellow with an un-

limited fund of excuses when something went wrong. Padway would have liked to continue running the paper directly, but he no longer had time.

About then, the paper ran its first advertisement. Thomasus had had to turn the screw on one of his debtors to make him buy space. The ad read:

DO YOU WANT A GLAMOROUS FUNERAL?

Go to meet your Maker in style! With one of our funerals to look forward to, you will hardly mind dying!
Don't imperil your chances of salvation with a bungled burial!
Our experts have handled some of the noblest corpses in Rome.
Arrangements made with the priesthood of any sect. Special rates for heretics. Appropriately doleful music furnished at slight extra cost.
John the Egyptian, Genteel Undertaker
Near the Viminal Gate

VI.

Junianus, construction manager of the Roman Telegraph Co., panted into Padway's office. He said: "Work"—stopped to get his breath, and started again—"work on the third tower on the Naples line was stopped this morning by a squad of soldiers from the Rome garrison. I asked them what the devil was up, and they said they didn't know; they just had orders to stop construction. What, most excellent boss, are you going to do about it?"

So the Goths objected? That meant seeing their higher-ups. Padway winced at the idea of getting involved any further in politics. He sighed. "I'll see Liuderis, I suppose."

The commander of the Rome garrison was a big, portly Goth with the bushiest white whiskers Padway had ever seen. His Latin was fair. But now and then he cocked a blue eye at the ceiling and moved his lips silently, as if praying; actually he was running through a declension or a conjugation for the right ending.

He said: "My good Martinus, there is a war on. You start erecting these . . . ah . . . mysterious towers without asking our permission. Some of your backers are patricians . . . ah . . . notorious for their pro-Greek sentiments. What are we to think? You should consider yourself lucky to have escaped arrest."

Padway protested: "I was hoping the army would find them useful for transmitting military information."

Liuderis shrugged. "I am merely a simple soldier doing my duty. I do not understand these . . . ah . . . devices. Perhaps they will work as you say. But I could not take the . . . ah . . . responsibility for permitting them."

"Then you won't withdraw your order?"

"No. If you want permission, you will have to see the king."

"But my dear sir, I can't spare the time to go running up to Ravenna—"

Another shrug. "All one to me, my good Martinus. I know my duty."

Padway tried guile. "You certainly do, it seems. If I were the king, I couldn't ask for a more faithful soldier."

"You flatter!" But Liuderis grinned, pleased. "I regret that I cannot grant your little request."

"What's the latest war news?"

Liuderis frowned. "Not very—But then I should be careful what I say. You are a more dangerous person than you look, I am sure. What is your religion?"

Padway was expecting that.

"Congregationalist. That's the nearest thing to Arianism we have in my country. Now look here, most excellent Liuderis, won't you withdraw that order? I'll write Thiudahad at once asking his permission."

"No, my good Martinus, I cannot. You get the permission first. And you had better go in person, if you want action."

Thus it came about that Padway found himself, quite against his wishes, trotting an elderly saddle horse across the Appenines toward the Adriatic. Fritharik had been delighted at first to get any kind of horse between his knees. Before they had gone very far his tone changed.

"Boss," he grumbled, "I'm not an educated man. But I know horseflesh. I always claimed that a good horse was a good investment." He added darkly: "If we are attacked by brigands, we'll have no chance with these poor old wrecks. Not that I fear death, or brigands either. But it would be sad for a Vandal knight to end in a nameless grave in one of these lonely valleys. When I was a noble in Africa—"

"We aren't running a racing stable," snapped Padway. At Fritharik's hurt look he was sorry he had spoken sharply. "Never mind, old man, we'll be able to afford good horses some day. Only right now I feel as if I had a pantsful of ants."

Brazilian army ants, he added to himself. He had done almost no riding since his arrival in old Rome, and not a great deal in his former life. By the time they reached Spoleto he felt as if he could neither sit nor stand, but would have to spend the rest of his life in a sort of semisquat, like a rheumatic chimpanzee.

They approached Ravenna at dusk on the fourth day. The City in the Mist sat dimly astride the thirty-mile causeway that divided the Adriatic from the vast marshy lagoons to the west. A faint sunbeam lighted the gilded church domes. The church bells bonged, and the frogs in the lagoons fell silent; then resumed their croaking. Padway thought that anyone who visited this strange city would always be haunted by the bong of the bells, the croak of the frogs, and the thin, merciless song of the mosquitoes.

Padway decided that the chief usher, like Poo-Bah, had been born sneering. "My good man," said this being, "I couldn't possibly give you an audience with our lord king for three weeks at least."

Three weeks! In that time half of Padway's assorted machines would have broken down, and his men would be running in useless circles trying to fix them. Menandrus, who was inclined to be reckless with money, especially other people's, would probably have run the paper into bankruptcy. This impasse required thought. Padway straightened his aching legs and started to leave.

The Italian immediately lost some of his toploftiness. "But," he cried in honest amazement, "didn't you bring any *money?*"

Of course, Padway thought, he should have known that the man hadn't meant what he'd said. "What's your schedule of rates?"

The usher, quite seriously, began counting on his fingers. "Well, for twenty solidi I could give you your audience tomorrow. For the day after tomorrow, ten solidi is my usual rate; but that's Sunday, so I'm offering interviews on Monday at seven and a half. For one week

Sometimes patrician Romans who didn't understand the philosophy of a free press made life hard for Padway's newsboys—

in advance, two solidi. For two weeks—"

Padway interrupted to offer a five-solidus bribe for a Monday interview, and finally got it at that price plus a small bottle of brandy. The usher said: "You'll be expected to have a present for the king, too, you know."

"I know," said Padway wearily. He showed the usher a small leather case. "I'll present it personally."

Thiudahad Tharasmund's son, King of the Ostrogoths and Italians; Commander in Chief of the Armies of Italy, Illyria, and Southern Gaul; Premier Prince of the Amal Clan; Count of Tuscany; Illustrious Patrician; *ex-officio* President of the Circus; et cetera, et cetera, was about Padway's height, thin to gauntness, and had a small gray beard. He peered at his caller with watery gray eyes, and said in a reedy voice: "Come in, come in, my good man. What's *your* business? Oh, yes, Martinus Paduei. You're the publisher chap, aren't you? Eh?" He spoke upper-class Latin without a trace of accent.

Padway bowed ceremoniously. "I am, my lord king. Before we discuss the business, I have—"

"Great thing, that book-making machine of yours. I've heard of it. Great thing for scholarship. You must see my man Cassiodorus. I'm sure he'd like you to publish his 'Gothic History.' Great work. Deserves a wide circulation."

Padway waited patiently. "I have a small gift for you, my lord. A rather unusual—"

"Eh? Gift? By all means. Let's see it."

Padway took out the case and opened it.

Thiudahad piped: "Eh? What the devil are those?"

Padway explained the function of spectacles. He hinted tactfully at the fact that he'd been up nights for a week bullying his tame lapidiary into grinding the lenses the way he wanted them. He didn't dwell on Thiudahad's notorious nearsightedness. Nor did he mention the fact that he knew next to nothing about optometry, except for the fact that myopic people used diverging lenses. "Now, my lord, if you will try these on one at a time, to see which suits you best—"

A twentieth-century optician would have shuddered. But Thiudahad found a pair that, he said, actually helped. "Fine, my good Martinus. Shall I be able to read all I want without getting headaches?"

"I hope so, my lord. At least they should help. Now, about my business here—"

"Oh, yes, you want to see me about publishing Cassiodorus. I'll fetch him for you."

"No, my lord. It's about something else." He went on quickly before Thiudahad could interrupt again, telling him of his difficulty with Liuderis.

"Eh? I never bother my local military commanders. They know their business."

"But, my lord—" and Padway gave the king a little sales talk on the importance of the telegraph company.

"Eh? A money-making scheme, you say? If it's as good as all that, why wasn't I let in on it at the start?"

That rather jarred Padway. He said something vague about there not having been time. King Thiudahad wagged his head. "Still, that wasn't considerate of you, Martinus. It wasn't loyal. And if people aren't loyal to their king, where are

we? If you deprive your king of an opportunity to make a little honest profit, I don't see why I should interfere with Liuderis on your account."

"Well, ahem, my lord, I did have an idea—"

"Not considerate at all. What were you saying? Come to the point, my good man, come to the point."

Padway resisted an impulse to strangle this exasperating little man. He beckoned Fritharik, who was standing statuesquely in the background. Fritharik produced a telescope, and Padway explained *its* functions.

"Yes? Yes? Very interesting, I'm sure. Thank you, Martinus. I will say that you bring your king original presents."

Padway gasped; he hadn't intended giving Thiudahad his best telescope. But it was too late now. He said: "I thought that if my lord king saw fit to . . . ah . . . ease matters with your excellent Liuderis, I could insure your undying fame in the world of scholarship."

"Eh? What's that? What do you know about scholarship? Oh, I forgot; you're a publisher. Something about Cassiodorus?"

Padway repressed a sigh. "No, my lord. *Not* Cassiodorus. How would you like the credit for revolutionizing men's ideas about the solar system?"

"I don't believe in interfering with my local commanders, Martinus. Liuderis is an excellent man. Eh? What were you saying? Something about the solar system? What's that got to do with Liuderis?"

"Nothing, my lord." Padway repeated what he had said.

"Well, maybe I'd consider it. What is this theory of yours?"

Little by little Padway wormed from Thiudahad a promise of a free hand for the telegraph company, in return for bits of information about the Copernican hypothesis, instructions for the use of the telescope to see the moons of Jupiter, and a promise to publish a treatise on astronomy in Thiudahad's name.

At the end of an hour he grinned and said, "Well, my lord king, we seem to be in agreement. There's just one more thing. This telescope would be a valuable instrument of warfare. If you wanted to equip your officers with them—"

"Eh? Warfare? You'll have to see Wittigis about that. He's my head general."

"Where's he?"

"Where? Oh, dear me, I don't know. Somewhere up north, I think. There's been a little invasion by the Allemans or somebody."

"When will he be back?"

"How should I know, my good Martinus? When he's driven out these Allemans or Burgunds or whoever they are."

"But, most excellent lord, if you'll pardon me, the war with the Imperialists is definitely on. I think it's important to get these telescopes into the hands of the army as soon as possible. We'd be prepared to supply them at a reasonable—"

"Now, Martinus," snapped the king peevishly, "don't try to tell me how to run my kingdom. You're as bad as my Royal Council. Always 'Why don't you do this?'; 'Why don't you do that?' I trust my commanders; don't bother myself with details. I say you'll have to see Wittigis, and that settles it."

Thiudahad was obviously prepared to be mulish, so Padway said a few polite nothings, bowed, and withdrew.

VII.

Back in Rome, Padway told Thomasus: "We ought to get the first message from Naples over the telegraph any time now."

Thomasus rubbed his hands together. "You are a wonder, Martinus. Only I'm worried that you'll overreach yourself. The messengers of the Italian civil service are complaining that this invention will destroy their livelihood. Unfair competition, they say."

Padway shrugged. "We'll see. Maybe there'll be some war news."

Thomasus frowned. "That's another thing that's worrying me. Thiudahad hasn't done a thing about the defense of Italy. I'd hate to see the war carried as far north as Rome."

"I'll make you a bet," said Padway. "The king's son-in-law, Evermuth the Vandal, will desert to the Imperialists. One solidus."

"Done!" Almost at that moment Junianus, who had been put in charge of operations, came in with a paper. It was the first message, and it carried the news that Belisarius had landed at Reggio; that Evermuth had gone over to him; that the Imperialists were marching on Naples.

Padway grinned at the banker, whose jaw was sagging. "Sorry, old man, but I need that solidus. I'm saving up for a new horse."

"Do You hear that, God? Martinus, the next time I lay a bet with a magician, you can have me declared incompetent and a guardian appointed."

Two days later a messenger came in and told Padway that the king was in Rome, staying at the Palace of Tiberius, and that Padway's presence was desired. Padway thought that perhaps Thiudahad had reconsidered the telescope proposal. But no.

"My good Martinus," said Thiudahad, "I must ask you to discontinue the operation of your telegraph. At once."

"What? Why, my lord king?"

"You know what happened? Eh? That thing of yours spread the news of my son-in-law's good fort . . . his treachery all over Rome a few hours after it happened. Bad for morale. Encourages the pro-Greek element, and brings criticism on me. *Me.* So you'll please not operate it any more, at least during the war."

"But my lord, I thought that your army would find it useful for—"

"Not another word about it, Martinus. I forbid it. Now, let me see. Dear me, there was something else I wanted to see you about. Oh, yes, my man Cassiodorus would like to meet you. You'll stay for lunch, won't you? Great scholar, Cassiodorus."

So Padway presently found himself bowing to the pretorian prefect, an elderly, rather saintly Italian. They were immediately deep in a discussion of historiography, literature, and the hazards of the publishing business. Padway to his annoyance found that he was enjoying himself. He knew that he was abetting these spineless old dodderers in their criminal disregard of their country's defense. But—upsetting thought—he had enough of the unworldly intellectual in his own nature so that he couldn't help sympathizing with them. And he hadn't gone on an intellectual debauch of this kind since he'd arrived in old Rome.

"Illustrious Cassiodorus," he said, "perhaps you've noticed that in my paper I've been trying to teach the typesetter to distinguish between U and V, and also between I and J,

That's a reform that's long been needed, don't you think?"

"Yes, yes, my excellent Martinus. The Emperor Claudius tried something of the sort. But which letter do you use for which sound in each case?"

Padway explained. He also told Cassiodorus of his plans for printing the paper, or at least part of it, in vulgar Latin. At that Cassiodorus held up his hands in mild horror.

"Excellent Martinus! These wretched dialects that pass for Latin nowadays? What would Ovid say if he heard them? What would Virgil say? What would any of the ancient masters say?"

"As they were a bit before our time," grinned Padway, "I'm afraid we shall never know. But I will assert that even in their day the final s's and m's had been dropped from ordinary pronunciation. And in any event, the pronunciation and grammar have changed too far from the classical models ever to be changed back again. So if we want our new instrument for the dissemination of literature to be useful, we shall have to adopt a spelling that more or less agrees with the spoken language. Otherwise people won't bother to learn it. To begin with, we shall have to add a half dozen new letters to the alphabet. For instance—"

When Padway left, hours later, he had at least made an effort to bring the conversation around to measures for prosecuting the war. It had been useless, but his conscience was salved.

Padway was surprised, though he shouldn't have been, at the effect of the news of his acquaintance with the king and the prefect. Well-born Romans called on him, and he was even asked to a couple of very dull dinners. As he listened to the windy conversation and the windier speeches, he thought that a twentieth-century after-dinner speaker could have taken lessons in high-flown, meaningless rhetoric from these people. From the slightly nervous way that his hosts introduced him around, he gathered that they still regarded him as something of a monster, but a well-behaved monster whom it might be useful to know.

Fritharik announced that a party of Goths wanted to look Padway's place over. He added in his sepulchral voice: "Thiudegiskel's with them. You know, the king's son. Watch out for him, excellent boss. He makes trouble."

There were six of them, all young, and they tramped into the house wearing swords, which was not good manners by the standards of the time. Thiudegiskel was a handsome, blond young man who had inherited his father's high-pitched voice.

He stared at Padway like something in a zoo, and said: "I've wanted to see your place ever since I heard you and the old man were mumbling over manuscripts together. I'm a curious chap, you know; active-minded. What the devil are all those silly machines for?"

Padway did some explaining, while the prince's companions made remarks about his personal appearance in Gothic, under the mistaken impression that he couldn't understand them.

"Ah, yes," said Thiudegiskel, interrupting one of the explanations. "I think that's all I'm interested in here. Now, let's see that book-making machine."

Padway showed him the presses.

"Oh, yes, I understand. Really a simple thing, isn't it? I could have

invented it myself. All very well for those who like it. Though I can read and write and all that. Better than most people, in fact. But I never cared much for it. Dull business, not suited to a healthy man like me."

"No doubt, no doubt, my lord," said Padway. He hoped that the red rage he was feeling didn't show in his face.

"Say, Willimer," said Thiudegiskel, "you remember that tradesman we had fun with last winter? He looked something like this Martinus person. Same big nose."

Willimer roared with laughter. "Do I remember it! *Guths in himinam!* I'll never forget the way he looked when we told him we were going to baptize him in the Tiber, with rocks tied to him so the angels couldn't carry him off! But the funniest thing was when some soldiers from the garrison arrested us for assault!"

Thiudegiskel said to Padway, between guffaws: "You ought to have been there, Martinus. You should have seen old Liuderis' face when he found out who we were! We made him grovel, I can tell you. I've always regretted that I missed the flogging of those soldiers who pinched us. That's one thing about me; I can appreciate the humor of things like that."

"Would you like to see anything more, my lord?" asked Padway, his face wooden.

"Oh, I don't know— Say, what are all those packing cases for?"

"Some stuff just arrived for our machines, my lord, and we haven't gotten around to burning the cases," Padway lied.

THIUDEGISKEL grinned good-naturedly. "Trying to fool me, huh? I know what you're up to. You're going to sneak your stuff out of Rome before Belisarius gets here, aren't you? That's one thing about me; I can see through little tricks like that. Well, can't say I blame you. Though it sounds as though you had inside information on how the war will go." He examined a new brass telescope on a workbench. "This is an interesting little device. I'll take it along, if you don't mind."

That was too much even for Padway's monumental prudence. "No, my lord, I'm sorry, but I need that in my business."

Thiudegiskel's eyes were round with astonishment. "Huh? You mean I can't have it?"

"That, my lord, is it."

"Well . . . uh . . . uh . . . if you're going to take that attitude, I'll pay for it."

"It isn't for sale."

Thiudegiskel's neck turned slowly pink with embarrassment and anger. His five friends moved up behind him, their left hands resting on their sword hilts.

The one called Willimer said in a low tone: "I *think*, gentlemen, that our king's son has been insulted."

Thiudegiskel had laid the telescope on the bench. He reached out for it; Padway snatched it up and smacked the end of the tube meaningfully against his left palm. He knew that, even if he got out of this situation in one piece, he'd curse himself for a double-dyed knight-errant idiot. But at the moment he was too furious to care.

The uncomfortable silence was broken by the shuffle of feet behind Padway; he saw the Goths' eyes shift from him. He glanced around. In the doorway were Fritharik, with his sword belt hitched around so the scabbard was in front, and Nerva, holding a three-foot length of bronze bar-stock. Behind them came

the other workmen with an assortment of blunt instruments.

"It seems," said Thiudegiskel, "that these people have no manners whatever. We should give them a lesson. But I promised my old man to lay off fighting. That's one thing about me; I always keep my promises. Come along, boys." They went.

"*Whew!*" said Padway. "You boys certainly saved my bacon. Thanks."

"Oh, it was nothing," said George Menandrus airily. "I'm rather sorry they didn't stay to fight it out. I'd have enjoyed smacking their thick skulls."

"You? *Honh!*" snorted Fritharik. "Boss, the first thing I saw when I started to round the men up was this fellow sneaking out the back door. You know how I changed his mind? I said I'd hang him with a rope made of his own if he didn't stick! And the others, I threatened to cut their heads off and stick them on the fence palings in front of the house." He contemplated infinite calamities for a few seconds, then added: "But it won't do any good, excellent Martinus. Those fellows will have it in for us, and they're pretty influential, naturally. They can get away with anything. We'll all end in nameless graves yet."

Padway struggled mightily to get the movable parts of his equipment packed for shipment to Florence. As far as he could remember his Procopius, Florence had not been besieged or sacked in Justinian's Gothic War, at least in the early part.

But the job wasn't even half done when eight soldiers from the garrison descended on him and told him he was under arrest. He was getting rather used to arrest by now, so he calmly gave his foremen and editor orders about getting the equipment moved and set up, and about seeing Thomasus and trying to get in touch with him. Then he went along.

On the way he offered to stand the Goths drinks. They accepted quickly enough. In the wineshop he got the commander aside to suggest a little bribe to let him go. The Goth seemed to accept, and pocketed a solidus. Then when Padway, his mind full of plans for shaving his beard, getting a horse, and galloping off to Florence, broached the subject of his release, the Goth looked at him with an air of pained surprise.

"Why, most distinguished Martinus, I couldn't think of letting you go! Our commander in chief, the noble Liuderis, is a man of stern and rigid principles. If my men talked, he'd hear about it, and he'd break me sure. Of course I appreciate your little *gift,* and I'll try to put in a good word for you."

Padway said nothing, but he made a resolve that it would be a long day before he put in a good word for this officer.

VIII.

Liuderis blew out his snowy whiskers and explained: "I am sorry you deceived me, Martinus. I never thought a true Arian would stoop to . . . ah . . . conniving with these pro-Greek Italians to let a swarm of Orthodox fanatics into Italy."

"Who says so?" asked Padway, more annoyed than apprehensive.

"No less a person than the . . . ah . . . noble Thiudegiskel. He told how when he visited your house, you not only insulted and reviled him, but boasted of your connections with the Imperialists. His companions corroborated him. They said you had inside information about a plan for betraying Rome, and that you were planning to move your effects

elsewhere to escape any disturbances. When my men arrested you, they found that you were in fact about to move."

"My dear sir!" cried Padway in exasperation. "Don't you think I have *any* brains? If I were in on some plot of that sort, do you think I'd go around telling the world about it?"

Lieuderis shrugged. "I would not know. I am only doing my duty, which is to hold you for questioning about this secret plan. Take him away, Sigifrith."

Padway hid a shudder at the word "questioning." If this honest blockhead got set on an idea, he'd have a swell chance of talking him out of it.

The Goths had set up a prison camp at the north end of the city, between the Flaminian Way and the Tiber. Two sides of the camp were formed by a hastily erected fence, and the remaining two by the Wall of Aurelian. Padway found that two Roman patricians had preceded him into custody; both said they had been arrested on suspicion of complicity in an Imperialist plot. Several more Romans arrived within a few hours.

The camp was no escape-proof masterpiece, but the Goths made the best of it. They kept a heavy guard around the fence, and along the wall. They even had a squad camped across the Tiber, in case a prisoner got over the wall and tried to swim the river.

For three days Padway rusticated. He walked from one end of the camp to the other, and back, and forward, and back. When he got tired of walking he sat. When he got tired of sitting he walked. He talked a little with his fellow prisoners, but in a moody and abstracted manner.

He'd been a fool—well, at least he'd been badly mistaken—in supposing that he could carry out his plans with as little difficulty as in Chicago. This was a harsh, convulsive world; you had to take it into account, or you'd get caught in the gears sooner or later. Even the experts at political intrigue and uniformed banditry often came to a bad end. What chance would such a hopelessly unwarlike and unpolitical alien as himself have?

Well, what chance did he have anyway? He'd kept out of public affairs as much as possible, and here he was in a horrifying predicament as a result of a petty squabble over a brass telescope. He might just as well have gone adventuring up to the hilt. If he ever got out, he *would* go adventuring. He'd show 'em!

THE FOURTH DAY failed to settle Padway's gnawing anxiety about his interrogation. The guards seemed excited about something. Padway tried to question them, but they rebuffed him. Listening to their muttering talk, he caught the word *folkmote*. That meant that the great meeting was about to be held near Tarracina, at which the Goths would consider what to do about the loss of Naples.

Padway got into talk with one of the patrician prisoners. "Bet you a solidus," he said, "that they depose Thiudahad and elect Wittigis king in his place."

The patrician, poor man, took him on.

Thomasus the Syrian arrived. He explained: "Nerva tried to get in to see you, but he couldn't afford a high enough bribe. How do they treat you?"

"Not badly. The food's not exactly good, but they give us plenty of it. What worries me is that Liuderis thinks I know all about some

alleged conspiracy to betray Rome, and he may use drastic methods to try to get information out of me."

"Oh, that. There is a conspiracy afoot, all right. But I think you'll be safe for a few days anyway. Liuderis has gone off to a convention, and the Goths' affairs are all in confusion." He went on to report on the state of Padway's business. "We got the last case off this morning. Ebenezer the Jew is going up to Florence in a couple of weeks. He'll look in and see that your foremen haven't run off with all your property."

"You mean to see *whether* they've run off with it. Any war news?"

"None, except that Naples suffered pretty badly. Belisarius' Huns got out of hand when the town was captured. But I suppose you know that. You can't tell me that you haven't some magical knowledge of the future."

"Maybe. Which side do you favor, Thomasus?"

"Me? Why—I hadn't thought about it much, but I suppose I favor the Goths. These Italians haven't any more fight than a lot of rabbits, so the country can't be really independent. And if we have to be ruled by outsiders, the Goths have been a lot easier on us than Justinian's tax gatherers would be. Only my Orthodox friends can't be made to see it that way. Like my cousin Antiochus, for instance. They become completely irrational when they get off on the subject of Arian heretics."

When Thomasus was ready to go, he asked Padway: "Is there anything I can bring you? I don't know what the guards will allow, but if there's some thing—"

Padway thought. "Yes," he said, "I'd like some painting equipment."

"Painting? You mean you're going to whitewash the Wall of Aurelian or something?"

"No; stuff for painting pictures. *You* know." Padway made motions.

"Oh, *that* kind of painting. Sure. It'll pass the time."

PADWAY WANTED to get on top of the wall, to give the camp a proper looking-over for ways of escape. So when Thomasus brought his painting supplies, he applied to the commander of the guards, a surly fellow named Hrotheigs, for permission. Hrotheigs took one look, and spoke one word: "*Nil*"

Padway masked his annoyance and retired to ponder on How to Win Friends. He spent the better part of the day experimenting with his equipment, which was a bit puzzling to one unaccustomed to it. A fellow prisoner explained that you coated one of the thin boards with wax, painted in water color on this surface, and then warmed the board until the wax became soft enough to absorb the pigment. It was ticklish business; if you overheated the board, the wax melted and the colors ran.

Padway was not a professional artist by any means. But an archæologist has to know something about drawing and painting in the exercise of his profession. So the next day Padway felt confident enough to ask Hrotheigs if he would like his portrait painted.

The Goth for the first time looked almost pleased. "*Could* you make a picture of me? I mean, one for me to keep?"

"Try to, excellent captain. I don't know how good it'll be. You may end up looking like Satanas with a gut-ache."

"Huh? Like whom? Oh, *I* see! Haw! Haw! Haw! You *are* a funny fellow."

So Padway painted a picture. As far as he could see, it looked as much like any black-bearded ruffian as it did like Hrotheigs. But the Goth was delighted, asserting that it was his spit and image. The second time he made no objections to Padway's climbing the wall to paint landscapes from the top, merely detailing a guard to keep close to him at all times.

Saying that he had to pick the best vantage point for painting, Padway walked up and down the wall the length of the camp. At the north end, where the wall turned east toward the Flaminian Gate, the ground outside sloped down outside for a few yards to a recess in the river bank—a small pool full of water lilies.

He was digesting this information when his attention was attracted to the camp. A couple of guards were bringing in a prisoner, in rich Gothic clothes, who was not co-operating. Padway recognized Thiudegiskel, the king's precious son. This was too interesting. Padway went down the ladder.

"*Hails,*" he said. "Hello."

THIUDEGISKEL was squatting disconsolately by himself. He was somewhat disheveled, and his face had been badly bruised. Both eyes would soon be swollen shut. The Roman patricians were grinning unsympathetically at him.

He looked up. "Oh, it's you," he said. Most of the arrogance seemed to have been let out of him, like air out of a punctured balloon.

"I didn't expect to run into you here," said Padway. "You look as if you'd had a hard time of it."

"*Unh.*" Thiudegiskel moved his joints painfully. "A couple of those soldiers we had flogged for arresting us got hold of me." Surprisingly, he grinned, showing a broken front tooth. "Can't say I blame them much. That's one thing about me; I can always see the other fellow's point of view."

"What are you in for?"

"Hadn't you heard? I'm not the king's son any more. Or, rather, my old man isn't king. The convention deposed him and elected that fathead Wittigis. So Fathead has me locked up so I can't make trouble."

"*Tsk, tsk.* Too bad."

Thiudegiskel grinned painfully again. "Don't try to tell me *you're* sorry for me. I'm not that stupid. But say, maybe you can tell me what sort of treatment to expect, and whom to bribe, and so on."

Padway gave the young man a few pointers on getting on with the guards, then asked: "Where's Thiudahad now?"

"I don't know. The last I'd heard he'd gone up to Tivoli to get away from the heat. But he was supposed to come back down here this week. Some piece of literary research he's working on."

Between what Padway remembered and the bits of information he had picked up, he had by now a pretty clear picture of the course of events. Thiudahad had been deposed. The new king, Wittigis, would put up a loyal and determined resistance, but the result would be worse than no resistance at all as far as Italy was concerned. He couldn't beat the Imperialists, having no brains to speak of. Neither could the Imperialists beat him, with their slender forces, except by years of destructive campaigning.

Padway had no very strong prejudice one way or the other in favor of Imperial or Gothic rule in Italy. If the Goths were lazy and ignorant, the Greeks were rapacious and venal. The sixth century Italian was hope-

lessly unmilitary. On the whole, the effect of the Gothic régime hadn't been bad. The Goths inforced tolerance on a people whose idea of religious freedom was liberty to hang, burn, or drown all members of other sects. And the Goths looked on the Peninsula as a pleasant home, full of civilized amenities, to be protected and preserved. If left undisturbed long enough, they would mix with the native Italians, and they might form as strong a combination as the Franks would with the Gauls to produce Frenchmen.

But how could the Gothic régime be preserved? If the Gothic king, whoever he was, would take Padway's advice, something might be done. Wittigis, from all Padway had heard, was not the man to do so. But old Thiudahad, worthless as he was by himself, *might* be managed.

A plan began to form in Padway's mind. He wished he'd told Thomasus to hurry back sooner. To keep darkness from falling—

When Thomasus did appear, Padway told him: "I want a couple of pounds of sulphur, mixed with olive oil to form a paste, and some candles. And forty feet of light rope, strong enough to support a man."

"Look here, Martinus, you're perfectly safe for the time being, so why don't you just stay here instead of trying some crazy scheme of escaping?"

"Oh, I have reasons. The convention should break up today or tomorrow, from what I hear, and I've got to get out before it does, if possible."

"Listen to him! Just listen! Here I am, the best friend he has in Rome, and does he pay attention to my advice? No! He wants to break out of the camp, and maybe get an arrow through the kidney for his pains, and then go get mixed up with Gothic politics. Did you ever hear the like? Martinus, you haven't some wild idea of getting yourself elected king of the Goths, have you? Because it won't work. You have to be—"

"I know," grinned Padway. "You have to be a Goth of the noble family of the Amals. That's why I'm in such a hurry to get out. You want the business saved so you'll get your loans back, don't you?"

"But how on earth am I to smuggle those things in? The guards watch pretty closely."

"Bring the sulphur-paste in a container at the bottom of a food basket. If they open it, say it's something my physician ordered. And for the rope—let's see—I know, go to my tailor and get a green cloak like mine. I've noticed several of them around; I seem to have started a style. Have him fasten the rope inside around the edges, lightly, so it can be ripped out quickly. Then, when you come in, lay your cloak alongside mine, and pick mine up when you go."

"Martinus, that's a crazy plan. I'll get caught sure, and what will become of my family? No, you'd better do as I say. I can't risk innocent people's futures. What time would you want me to come around with the rope and things?"

Padway sat on the Wall of Aurelian in the bright morning sunshine. He affected to be much interested in the Tomb of Hadrian down river on the other side. The guard who was detailed to him, one Aiulf, looked over his shoulder. Padway appreciated Aiulf's interest, but he sometimes wished the Goth's beard was less long and bristly. It was a disconcerting thing to have crawling over your shoulder and down

your shirt front when you were trying to get a color just right.

"You see," he explained in halting Gothic, "I hold the brush out and look past it at the thing I am painting, and mark its apparent length and height off on the brush with my thumb. That is how I keep everything in proper proportion."

"I see," said Aiulf in equally bad Latin—both were having a little language practice. "But suppose you want to paint a small picture—how would you say—with a lot of things in it just the same? The measurements on the brush would all be too large, would they not?" Aiulf, for a camp guard, was not at all stupid.

Padway's attention was actually on things other than the Tomb. He was covertly watching all the guards, and his little pile of belongings. All the prisoners did that, for obvious reasons. But Padway's interest was special. He was wondering when the candle concealed in the food basket would burn down to the sulphur-paste. He had apparently had a lot of trouble that morning getting his brazier going; actually he had been getting his little infernal machine set up. He also couldn't help stealing an occasional nervous glance at the soldiers across the river, and at the lily-covered pool behind him.

Aiulf grew tired of watching and retired a few steps. He sat down on his little stool, took up his flutelike instrument, and started to play faint moaning notes. The thing sounded like a banshee lost in a rain barrel, and never failed to give Padway the slithering creeps. But he valued Aiulf's good will too much to protest.

He worked and worked, and still his contraption showed no signs of life. The candle must have gone out; it would surely have burned down to the sulphur by now. Or the sulphur had failed to light. It would soon be time for lunch. If they called him down off the wall, it would arouse suspicion for him to say he wasn't hungry. Perhaps.

Aiulf stopped his moaning for an instant. "What is the matter with your ear, Martinus? You keep rubbing it."

"Just an itch," replied Padway. He didn't say that fingering his ear lobe was a symptom of shrieking nervousness. He kept on painting. One result of his attempt, he thought, would be the lousiest picture of a tomb ever painted by an amateur artist.

Below, in the camp, a prisoner coughed; then another. Then they were all coughing. Fragments of talk floated up: "What the devil—" "Must be the tanneries—" "Can't be, they're two or three miles from here—" "That's burning sulphur, by all the saints—" "Maybe the devil is paying us a call—" People moved around; the coughing increased; the guards trailed into the camp. Somebody located the source of the fumes and kicked Padway's pile. Instantly a square yard was covered with yellow mush over which little blue flames danced. There were strangled shouts. A thin wisp of blue smoke crawled up through the still air. The guards on the wall, including Aiulf, hurried to the ladder and down.

Padway had planned his course so carefully in his mind that he went through it almost unconscious of the individual acts. Over his brazier were two little pots of molten wax, both already pigmented. He plunged his hands into the scalding stuff and smeared his face and beard with dark green wax. It hardened almost instantly. With his fingers he then

smeared three large circle of yellow wax from the other pot over the green.

Then, as if he were just strolling, he walked up to the angle of the wall, squatted down out of sight of those in the camp, ripped the rope out of the lining of his cloak, and slipped a bight over a projection at the corner of the wall. A last glance across the river showed that the soldiers over there hadn't, apparently, noticed anything, though they could have heard the commotion inside the wall if they'd listened. Padway lowered himself down the north face of the wall, hand over hand.

He flipped the rope down after him. As he did so, a flash of sunlight on his wrist made him curse silently. His watch would be ruined by prolonged soaking; he should have thought to give it to Thomasus. He saw a loose stone in the wall. He pulled it out, wrapped the watch in his handkerchief, put it in the hole, and replaced the stone. It took only a few seconds, but he knew he was being insanely foolish to risk the loss of time for the sake of the watch. On the other hand, being the kind of person he was, he just couldn't ruin the watch knowingly.

He trotted down the slope to the pond. He didn't throw himself in, but walked carefully out to where it was a couple of feet deep. He sat down in the dark water, like a man getting into an overhot tub bath, and stretched out on his back among the pond lilies until only his nose and eyes were above water. He moved the water plants around until they hid him pretty thoroughly. For the rest, he had to rely on the green of his cloak and his bizarre facial camouflage for concealment. He waited, listening to his own heart and the murmur from over the wall.

He hadn't long to wait. There were shouts, the blowing of whistles, the pounding of large Gothic feet on the top of the wall. The guards waved to the soldiers across the river. Padway didn't dare turn his head far enough to see, but he could imagine a rowboat's being put out.

"*Ailoe!* The fiend seems to have vanished into thin air—" "He's hiding somewhere, you idiot! Search, search! Get the horses out!"

Padway lay still while guards searched around the base of the wall and poked swords into bushes barely big enough to hide a Sealyham. He lay still while a small fish maddeningly investigated his left ear. He lay still, his eyes almost closed, while a couple of Goths walked around the pond and stared hard at it and at him, hardly thirty feet from them. He lay still while a Goth on a horse rode splashing through the pond, actually passing within fifteen feet of him. He lay still through the whole long afternoon, while the sounds of search and pursuit rose and ebbed, and finally faded away completely.

Nevitta Gummund's son was justifiably startled when a man rose from the shadows of the bushes that lined the driveway to his house and called him by name. He had just ridden up to the farm. Hermann, in tow as usual, had his sword halfway out before Martin Padway identified himself.

He explained: "I got here a couple of hours ago, and wanted to borrow a horse. Your people said you were away at the convention, but that you'd be back sometime tonight. So I've been waiting." He went on to tell briefly of his imprisonment and escape.

The Goth bellowed. "Hah! Hah! You mean to say, hah! hah! that you

lay in the pond all day, right under the noses of the guards, with your face painted up like a damned flower? Hah! Hah! That's the best thing I ever heard!" He dismounted. "Come on in the house and tell me more about it. *Whew*, you certainly stink like a frog pond, old *frijonds!*"

Later he said, more seriously: "I'd like to trust you, Martinus. By all accounts, you're a pretty reliable young man, in spite of your funny foreign ways. But how do I *know* that Liuderis wasn't right? There *is* something queer about you, you know. People say you can foresee the future, but try to hide the fact. And some of those machines of yours do smell a little bit of magic."

"I'll tell you," said Padway thoughtfully. "I can see a little bit of the future. Don't blame me; I just happen to have that power. Satanas has nothing to do with it. That is, I can sometimes see what will happen *if* people are allowed to do what they intend to. If I use my knowledge to intervene, that changes the future, so my vision isn't true any more.

"In this case, I know that Wittigis will lose the war. And he'll lose it in the worst possible way—at the end of years of fighting which will completely devastate Italy. Not his fault. He's simply built that way. The last thing I want is to see the country ruined; it would spoil a lot of plans I have. So I propose to intervene and change the natural course of events. The results may be better; they could hardly be worse."

Nevitta frowned. "You mean you're going to try to defeat us Goths quickly. I don't think I could agree to such—"

"No. I propose to win your war for you. If I can."

IX.

If Padway wasn't mistaken, and if Procopius hadn't lied, Thiudahad ought to pass along the Flaminian Way within the next twenty-four hours in his panicky flight to Ravenna. All the way, Padway had asked people whether the ex-king had passed that way. All said no.

Now, on the outskirts of Narnia, he was as far north as he dared go. The Flaminian Way forked at this point, and he had no way of knowing whether Thiudahad would take the new road or the old. So he and Hermann made themselves easy by the side of the road and listened to their horses cropping grass. Padway looked at his companion with a bilious eye. Hermann had taken much too much beer aboard at Ocriculum.

To Padway's questions and his instructions about taking turns at watching the road, he merely grinned idiotically and said "*Ja, ja!*" He had finally gone to sleep in the middle of a sentence, and no amount of shaking would arouse him.

Padway walked up and down in the shade, listening to Hermann's snores and trying to think. He had not slept since the previous day, and here that whiskery slob was taking the ease that he, Padway, needed badly. Maybe he should have grabbed a couple of hours at Nevitta's—but if he'd once gotten to sleep nothing short of an earthquake would have gotten him up. His stomach was jumpy; he had no appetite; and this accursed sixth century world didn't even have coffee to lighten the weights that dragged down his eyelids.

Suppose Thiudahad didn't show up? Or suppose he went roundabout, by the Salarian Way? Or suppose he'd already passed? Time after

time he'd tensed himself as dust appeared down the road, only to have it materialize as a farmer driving an oxcart, or a trader slouching along on a mule, or a small half-naked boy driving a few goats.

Could his, Padaway's, influence have changed Thiudahad's plans so that his course of action would be different from what it should have been? Padway saw his influence as a set of ripples spreading over a pool. By the mere fact of having known him, the lives of people like Thomasus and Fritharik had already been changed radically from what they would have been if he'd never appeared in Rome.

But Thiudahad had seen him only twice, and nothing very drastic had happened either time. Thiudahad's course in time and space might have been altered, but only very slightly.

At least, Tancredi had been right about this being an entirely new branch of the tree of time, as he called it. The things that Padway had done so far, while only a fraction of what he hoped to do, couldn't help change history somewhat. Yet he hadn't vanished into thin air, as he should have if this had been the same history that produced him.

That new bit of dust down the road was probably another damned cow or flock of sheep. No, it was a man on a horse. Probably some fat Narnian burgher. He was in a hurry, whoever he was. Padway's ears caught the blowing of a hard-ridden mount; then he recognized Thiudahad.

"Hermann!" he yelled.

"*Akhkhkhkhkhkhg,*" snored Hermann. Padway ran over and poked the Goth with his boot. Hermann said: "*Akhkhkhkhg. Akhkhkhg. Meina liubs— guhhhg. Akhkhkhg.*"

Padway gave up; the ex-king would be up to them in an instant. He swung aboard his horse and trotted out into the road with his arm up. "Hey, Thiudahad! My lord!"

Thiudahad kicked his horse and hauled on the reins at the same time, apparently undecided whether to stop, try to run past Padway, or turn around the way he had come. The exasperated animal thereupon put its head down and bucked. The waters of the Nar showed blue between Thiudahad and his saddle for a second; he came down on the saddle with a thump and clutched it frantically. His face was white with terror and brown with dust.

Padway leaned over and gathered up the reins. "Calm yourself, my lord," he said.

"Who . . . who . . . what— Oh, it's the publisher. What's your name? Don't tell me; I know it. Why are you stopping me? I've got to get to Ravenna . . . Ravenna—"

"Calm yourself. You'd never reach Ravenna alive."

"What do you mean? Are you out to murder me, too?"

"Not at all. But, as you may have heard, I have some small skill at reading the future."

"Oh, dear, yes, I've heard. What's . . . what's my future? Don't tell me I'm going to be killed! *Please* don't tell me that, excellent Martinus. I don't want to die. If they'll just let me live I won't bother anybody again, ever." The little gray-bearded man fairly gibbered with fright.

"If you'll keep still for a few minutes, I'll tell you what I see. Do you remember when, for a consideration, you gypped a noble Goth out of a beautiful heiress who had been promised to him in marriage?"

"Oh, dear me. That would be Optaris Winithar's son, wouldn't it? Only don't say 'gypped,' excellent

Martinus. I merely . . . ah . . . exerted my influence on the side of the better man. But why?"

"Wittigis gave Optaris a commission to hunt you down and kill you. He's following you now, riding day and night. If you continue toward Ravenna, this Optaris will catch up with you before you get there, pull you off your horse, and cut your throat—like this, *khh!*" Padway clutched his own beard with one hand, tilted his chin up, and drew a finger across his Adam's apple.

Thiudahad covered his face with his hands. "What'll I do, what'll I do? If I could get to Ravenna, I have friends there—"

"That's what *you* think. The Goths of your Royal Council think otherwise."

"But isn't there anything? I mean, is Optaris fated to kill me no matter what I do? Can't we hide?"

"Perhaps. My prophecy is good only if you try to carry out your original plan."

"Well, we'll hide, then."

"All right, just as soon as I get this fellow awake." Padway indicated Hermann.

"Why wait for him? Why not just leave him?"

"He works for a friend of mine. He was supposed to take care of me, but it's turned out the other way around." They dismounted, and Padway resumed his efforts to arouse Hermann.

Thiudahad sat down on the grass and moaned: "Such ingratitude! And I was such a good king—"

"Sure," said Padway acidly, "except for breaking your oath to Amalasuentha not to interfere in public affairs, and then having her murdered—"

"But you don't understand, excellent Martinus. She had had our noblest patriot, Count Tulum, murdered, along with those other two friends of her son Athalarik—"

"—and intervening—for a consideration, again—in the last Papal election; offering to sell Italy to Justinian in return for an estate near Constantinople and an annuity—"

"*What?* How did you know— I mean it's a lie!"

"I know lots of things. To continue: neglecting the defense of Italy; failing to relieve Naples—"

"Oh, dear me. You don't understand, I tell you. I hate all this military business. I admit I'm no soldier; I'm a scholar. So I leave it to my generals. That's only sensible, isn't it?"

"As events have proved—no."

"Oh, dear. Nobody understands me," moaned Thiudahad.

"That's too bad," said Padway. "But if you want to go on living, you'll do as I say from now on."

"What? Now, look here, Martinus, even if I'm not king any more, I'm of noble birth, and I won't be dictated to—"

"Suit yourself." Padway rose and walked toward his horse. "I'll ride down the road a way. When I meet Optaris, I'll tell him where to find you."

"*Eek!* Don't do that! I'll do what you say! I'll do anything, only don't let that awful man catch me!"

"All right. If you obey orders, I may even be able to get you back your kingship. But it'll be purely nominal this time, understand." Padway didn't miss the crafty gleam in Thiudahad's eyes. He added: "Just in case you're tempted to treat me the way you treated Amalasuentha, I have a machine safely hidden away. If anything unfortunate should happen to me, such as imprisonment or death, the machine would operate to give you a peculiarly horrible form of leprosy.

Your eyeballs will rot—" He gave Thiudahad a detailed and emetic description of what would happen to him. With each phrase Thiudahad seemed to grow smaller and older. Then the eyes shifted past Padway.

"Here he comes! It's the murderer, Optaris!" he squealed.

PADWAY spun around. Sure enough, a burly Goth was smoking up the road toward them. This was a fine state of affairs, thought Padway. He'd wasted so much time talking that the pursuer had caught up with them. He should have had a few hours' leeway still; but there the man was. What to do; what to do?

He had no weapon but a knife designed for cutting steaks rather than human throats. Thiudahad had no sword, either. To Padway, brought up in a world of Thompson submachine guns, swords seemed silly weapons, always catching you between the knees. So it had never occurred to him to form the habit of toting one. He realized his error as his eye caught the flash of Optaris' blade. The Goth leaned forward and kicked his horse straight at them.

Thiudahad stood rooted to the spot, trembling violently and making little meowing sounds of terror. He wet his dry lips and squealed one word over and over: "*Armaio!* Mercy!" Optaris grinned through his beard and swung his right arm up.

At the last instant Padway dived at the ex-king and tackled him, rolling him out of the way of Optaris' horse. He scrambled up as Optaris reined in furiously, the animal's hoofs kicking dust forward as they braked. Thiudahad got up, too, and bolted for the shelter of the trees. With a yell of rage Optaris jumped to the ground and took after him. Meantime, Padway had had a rush of brains to the head. He bent over Hermann, who was beginning to revive, tore Hermann's sword out of the scabbard, and sprinted to cut off Optaris. It wasn't necessary. Optaris saw him coming and started for him, evidently preferring to settle with Padway before the latter could take him in flank.

Now Padway cursed himself for all kinds of a fool. He had only the crudest theoretical knowledge of fencing, and no practical experience whatever. The heavy Gothic broadsword was unfamiliar and uncomfortable in his sweaty hand, and he could see the whites of Optaris' eyes as the Goth trotted up to him, took his measure, shifted his weight, and whipped his sword arm up for a backhand slash.

Padway's parry was more instinctive than designed. The blades met with a great clang, and Padway's borrowed sword went sailing away, end over end, into the woods. Quick as a flash Optaris struck again, but met only air and swung himself halfway around. If Padway was an incompetent fencer, there was nothing the matter with his legs. He sprinted after his sword, found it, and kept right on running with Optaris panting heavily after him. He'd been a minor quarter-mile star in college; if he could run the legs off Optaris maybe the odds would be nearer even when they finally—*umph!* He tripped over a root and sprawled on his face.

Somehow he rolled over and got to his feet before Optaris came up to him. And, somehow, he got himself between Optaris and a pair of big oaks that grew too close together to be squeezed between. So there was nothing for him to do but stand and take it. As the Goth clumped

The stinking mass of oil-soaked rags and burning sulphur looped off through the night. An instant later Belisarius' camp sounded like an angry hornets' nest.

forward and swung his sword over his head, Padway, in a last despairing gesture, thrust as far as he could at Optaris' exposed chest, more with the idea of keeping the man off than of hurting him.

Now, Optaris was an able fighter. But the swordplay of his age was almost entirely with the edge. Nobody had ever worked a simple stop thrust on him. So it was no fault of his that in his effort to get within cutting distance of Padway, he spitted himself neatly on the outthrust blade. His own slash faltered, and ended against one of the oaks. The Goth gasped, tried to breathe, and his thick legs slowly sagged. He fell, pulling the sword out of his body. His hands clawed at the dirt, and a great river of blood ran from his mouth.

When Thiudahad and Hermann came up they found Padway vomiting quietly against a tree trunk. He barely heard their congratulations.

Finally he said to Thiudahad: "We'd better disguise you. If you're recognized, Wittigis will send another of your friends around to call. Better take that beard off first. It's too bad you already have your hair cut short, Roman style."

"Maybe," said Hermann, "could cut him off nose. Then nobody recognize."

"Oh!" cried Thiudahad, clutching the member indicated. "Oh, dear me! You wouldn't *really* disfigure me that way, most excellent, most noble Martinus?"

"Not if you behave yourself, my lord. And your clothes are entirely too fancy. Hermann, could I trust you to go into Narnia and buy an Italian peasant's Sunday-go-to-church outfit?"

"*Ja, ja,* you give me *silubr.* I go."

"What?" squeaked Thiudahad. "I will not get myself up in such an absurd costume! A prince of the Amals has his dignity—"

Padway looked at him narrowly and felt the edge of Hermann's sword. He said silkily: "Then, my lord, you *do* prefer the loss of your nose? No? I thought not. Give Hermann a couple of solidi. We'll make a prosperous farmer of you. How are you on Umbrian dialect?"

X.

Liuderis Oskar's son, commander of the garrison of the city of Rome, looked out of his office window gloomily at the gray September skies. The world had been turning upside down too often for his simple, loyal soul. First Thiudahad is deposed and Wittigis elected king. Then Wittigis, by some mysterious process, convinces himself and the other Gothic leaders that the way to deal with the redoubtable Belisarius is to run off to Ravenna, leaving an inadequate garrison in Rome. And now it transpires that the citizens are becoming disaffected; worse, that his troops are afraid to try to hold the city against the Greeks; worse yet, that Pope Silverius, blandly violating his oaths to Wittigis on the ground that the king is a heretic, has been corresponding with Belisarius with the object of arranging a bloodless surrender of the city.

But all these shocks were mild compared to that which he got when the two callers announced by his orderly turned out to be Martin Padway and ex-King Thiudahad, whom he recognized immediately despite his clean-shaven state. He simply sat, stared, and blew out his whiskers. "You!" he said. "You!"

"Yes, us," said Padway mildly. "You know Thiudahad, King of the Ostrogoths and Italians, I believe.

And you know me. I'm the king's new quæstor, by the way." (That meant he was a combination of secretary, legal draftsman, and ghost writer.

"But . . . but we have another king! You two are supposed to have prices on your heads or something."

"Oh, that," smiled Padway negligently. "The Royal Council was a little hasty in its action as we hope to show them in time. We'll explain—"

"But where have you been? And how did you escape from my camp? And what are you doing here?"

"One thing at a time, please, excellent Liuderis. First, we've been up at Florence collecting a few supplies for the campaign. Second—"

"What campaign?"

"—second, I have ways of getting out of camps denied to ordinary men. Third, we're here to lead your troops against the Greeks and destroy them."

"You are mad, both of you! I shall have you locked up until—"

"Now, now, wait until you hear us. Do you know of my . . . ah . . . little gifts for seeing the future results of men's actions?"

"Unh, I *have* heard things. But if you think you can seduce me away from my duty by some wild tale—"

"Exactly, my dear sir. The king will tell you how I foresaw Optaris' unfortunate attempt on his life, and how I used my knowledge to thwart Optaris' plans. If you insist, I can produce more evidence.

"For instance, I can tell you that you'll get no help from Ravenna. That Belisarius will march up the Latin Way in November. That the pope will persuade your garrison to march away before they arrive. And that *you* will remain at your post, and be captured and sent to Constantinople."

Liuderis gauped. "Are you in league with Satanas? Or perhaps you are the devil himself? I have not told a soul of my determination to stay if my garrison leaves, and yet you know of it."

Padway smiled. "No such luck, excellent Liuderis. Just an ordinary flesh-and-blood man who happens to have a few special gifts. Moreover, Wittigis will eventually lose his war, though only after years of destructive fighting. That is, all these things will happen unless you change your plans."

It took an hour of talk to wear Liuderis down to the point where he asked: "Well, what plans for operations against the Greeks did you have in mind?"

Padway replied: "We know they'll come by the Latin Way, so there's no point in leaving Tarracina garrisoned. And we know about when they'll come. Counting the Tarracina garrison, about how many men could you collect by the end of next month?"

Liuderis blew out his whiskers and thought. "If I called in the men from Formia—six thousand, perhaps seven. About half and half archers and lancers. That is, assuming that King Wittigis did not hear of it and interfere. But news travels slowly."

"If I could show you how you'd have a pretty good chance against the Greeks, would you lead them out?"

"I do not know. I should have to think. Perhaps. If as you say our king—excuse me, noble Thiudahad, I mean the *other* king—is bound to be defeated, it might be worth taking a chance on. What would you do?"

"Belisarius has about ten thousand men," replied Padway. "He'll leave two thousand to garrison Naples and other southern towns.

He'll still outnumber us a little. I notice that your brave Wittigis ran off when he had twenty thousand available."

Liuderis shrugged and looked embarrassed. "It is true, that was not a wise move. But he expects many thousands more from Gaul and Dalmatia."

"Have your men had any practice at night attacks?" asked Padway.

"Night attacks? You mean to assault the enemy at *night?* No, I never heard of such a proceeding. Battles are always fought in the daytime. A night attack does not sound very practical to me. How would you keep control of your men?"

"That's just the point. Nobody ever heard of the Goths making a night attack, so it ought to have some chance of success. But it'll require special training. First, you'll have to throw out patrols on the roads leading north, to turn back people who might carry the news to Ravenna. Then I'll need help to get some more of my telegraph towers finished, so we'll know just when Belisarius leaves Naples and how fast he advances. And I need a couple of good catapult engineers. I don't want to depend entirely on the books in the libraries for my artillery. If none of your troops knows anything about catapults, we ought to be able to dredge up a Roman or two who does. And you might appoint me to your staff—you don't have staffs? Then it's time you started—at a reasonable salary—"

Padway lay on a hilltop near Fregellae and watched the Imperialists through a telescope. He was surprised that Belisarius, as the foremost soldier of his age, hadn't thrown scouts out farther; but then, this was 536. His advance party consisted of a few hundred mounted Huns and Moors, who galloped about, pushing up side roads a few hundred yards and racing back. Then came two thousand of the famous *cataphracti* or cuirassiers, trotting in orderly formation. The low, cold sun glittered on the scales of their armor. These were the best and certainly the most versatile soldiers in the world, and everybody was afraid of them. Padway, watching their cloaks and scarves flutter behind them, didn't feel too confident himself. Then came three thousand Isaurian archers marching afoot, and finally two thousand more cuirassiers.

Liuderis, at Padway's elbow, said: "That is some sort of signal. *Ja,* I believe they are going to camp there. How did you know they would pick that spot, Martinus?"

"Simple. You remember that little device I had on the wheel of that wagon? That measures distance. I measured the distances along the road. Knowing their normal day's march and the point they started from, the rest was easy."

"*Tsk, tsk,* wonderful. How do you think of all those things?" Liuderis' big, trustful eyes reminded Padway of those of a St. Bernard. "Shall I have the engineers set up Brunhilde now?"

"Not yet. When the sun sets we'll measure the distance to the camp."

"How will you do that without being seen?"

"I'll show you when the time comes. Meanwhile make sure that the boys keep quiet and out of sight."

Liuderis frowned. "They will not like having to eat a cold supper. If we do not watch them, somebody will surely start a fire."

Padway sighed. He'd had plenty of sad experience with the temperamental and undisciplined Goths. One minute they were as excited as small boys over the plans of Mysterious Martinus, as they called him; the next they were growling on the edge of mutiny about the enforcement of some petty regulation. Since Padway felt that it wouldn't do for him to order them around directly, poor Liuderis had to take it.

The Byzantines set up their camp with orderly promptitude.

PADWAY GOT UP, grunting at the weight of his shirt of scale mail. He wished a lot of things, such as that he'd had time to train some mounted archers. They were the only troops who could really deal on even terms with the deadly Byzantine cuirassiers. But he'd have to hope that darkness would nullify the Imperialists' advantage in missle fire.

He superintended the driving of a stake into the ground and paced off the base of a triangle. With a little geometry he figured the quarter-mile distance that was Brunhilde's range, and ordered the big catapult set up. The thing required eleven wagon loads of lumber, even though it was not of record size. Padway hovered around his engineers nervously, jumping and hissing reprimands when somebody dropped a piece of wood.

Snatches of song came from the camp. Apparently Padway's scheme of leaving a wagon load of brandy where foragers would be sure to find it had had results, despite Belisarius' well-known strictness with drunken soldiers.

The bags of sulphur paste were brought out. Padway looked at his watch, which he had recovered from the hole in the wall. It was nearly midnight, though he'd have sworn the job hadn't taken over an hour.

"All ready?" he asked. "Light the first bag." The oil-soaked rags were lit. The bag was placed in the sling. Padway himself pulled the lanyard. The bag did a fiery parabola. Padway raced up the little knoll that masked his position. He missed seeing the bag land in the camp. But the drunken songs ended; instead there was a growing buzz as of a nest of irritated hornets. Behind him whips cracked and ropes creaked in the dark, as the horses heaved on the block-and-tackle he'd rigged up for quick recocking. *Wht-bam!* The fuse came out of the second bag in midair, so that it continued its course to the camp unseen and harmless. Never mind; another would follow in a few seconds. Another did. The buzz was louder, and broken by clear, high-pitched commands. *Wht-bam!*

"Liuderis!" Padway called. "Give your signal!"

Over in the camp the horse lines began to scream. The horses didn't like sulphur dioxide. Good; maybe the Imperialist cavalry would be immobilized. Under the other noises Padway heard the clank and shuffle of the Goths, getting under way. Something in the camp was burning brightly. Its light showed a company of Goths on Padway's right picking their way over the broken, weed-covered ground. Their big round shields were painted white for recognition, and every man had a wet rag tied over his nose. Padway thought they ought to be able to frighten the Imperialists if they couldn't do anything else. On all sides the night was alive with the little orange twinkle of firelight on helmets, scale shirts, and sword blades.

As the Goths closed in, the noise increased tenfold, with the addition

of organized battle yells, the flat snap of bowstrings, and finally the blacksmith's symphony of metal on metal. Padway could see "his" men, black against the fires, grow smaller and then drop out of sight into the camp ditch. Then there was only a confused blur of movement and a great din as the attackers scrambled up the other side—invisible until they popped up into the firelight again—and mixed it with the defenders.

One of the engineers called to say that that was all the sulphur bags, and what should they do now? "Stand by for further orders," replied Padway.

"But captain, can't we go fight? We're missing all the fun!"

"*Ni*, you can't! You're the only engineer corps west of the Adriatic that's worth a damn, and I won't have you getting yourselves killed off!"

"Huh!" said a voice in the dark. "This is a cowardly way of doing, standing back here. Let's go, boys. To hell with Mysterious Martinus!" And before Padway could do anything, the twenty-odd catapult men trotted off toward the fires.

Padway angrily called for his horse and rode off to find Liuderis. The commander was sitting his horse in front of a solid mass of lancers. The firelight picked out their helms and faces and shoulders, and the forest of vertical lances. They looked like something out of a Wagnerian opera.

Padway asked: "Has there been any sign of a sortie yet?"

"No."

"There will be, if I know Belisarius. Who's going to lead this troop?"

"I am."

"Oh, lord! I thought I explained why the commander should—"

"I know, Martinus," said Liuderis firmly. "You have lots of ideas. But you're young. I'm an old soldier, you know. Honor requires that I lead my men. Look, isn't something doing in the camp?"

True enough, the Imperial cavalry was coming out. Belisarius had, despite his difficulties, managed to collect a body of manageable horses and cuirassiers to ride them. As they watched, this group thundered out the main gate, the Gothic infantry scattering in all directions before them. Liuderis shouted, and the mass of Gothic knights clattered off, picking up speed as they went. Padway saw the Imperialists swing widely to take the attacking foot in the rear, and then Liuderis' men hid them. He heard the crash as the forces met, and then everything was dark confusion for a few minutes.

Little by little the noise died. Padway wondered just what had happened. He felt silly, sitting alone on his horse a quarter mile from all the action. Theoretically, he was where the staff, the reserves, and the artillery ought to be. But there were no reserves, their one catapult stood deserted off in the dark somewhere, and the artillerists and staff were exchanging sword strokes with the Imperialists up front.

With a few mental disparagements of sixth-century ideas of warfare, Padway trotted toward the camp. He came across a Goth quite peacefully tying up his shin with a piece torn from his tunic, another who clutched his stomach and moaned, and a corpse. Then he found a considerable body of dismounted Imperial cuirassiers standing weaponless.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

One replied: "We're prisoners.

There were some Goths supposed to be guarding us, but they were angry at missing the looting, so they went off to the camp."

"What became of Belisarius?"

"Here he is." The prisoner indicated a man sitting on the ground with his head in his hands. "A Goth hit him over the head and stunned him. He's just coming to. Do you know what will be done with us, noble sir?"

"Nothing very drastic, I imagine. You fellow wait here until I send somebody for you." Padway rode on toward the camp. Soldiers were strange people, he thought. With Belisarius to lead them and a fair chance to use their famous bow-plus-lance tactics, the *cataphracti* could lick thrice their number of any other troops. Now, because their leader had been conked on the head, they were as meek as lambs.

There were more corpses and wounded near the camp, and a few riderless horses calmly grazing. In the camp itself were Imperial soldiers, Isaurians, and Moors, and Huns, standing around in little clumps, holding bits of clothing to their noses against the reek of sulphur fumes. Goths ran hither and thither among them looking for movable property worth stealing.

Padway dismounted and asked a couple of the looters where Liuderis was. They said they didn't know, and went on about their business.

Padway hunted until he found an officer, Gudareths, who seemed to have some sort of wits about him. At least, he was making frantic efforts to round up a few troopers to guard the surrendered Imperialists. The minute he turned his back on his men, they melted off into the general confusion of the camp.

Padway grabbed him. "Forget them," he snapped. "Liuderis is dead, I hear, but Belisarius is alive. If we don't nab him—"

So they took a handful of Goths in tow and walked back to where the Imperial general still sat among his men. They moved the lesser prisoners away, and set several men to guard Belisarius. Then they put in a solid hour rounding up troopers and prisoners and getting them into some sort of order.

Gudareths, a small, cheerful man, talked continually: "That was some charge, some charge. Never saw a better, even in that battle against the Gepids on the Danube. We took them in flank, neatest thing you ever saw. The Greek general fought like a wild man, until I hit him over the head. Broke my sword, it did. Best stroke I ever made. Even harder than the time I cut off that Bulgarian Hun's head, five years ago. Oh, yes, I've killed hundreds of enemies in my time. Thousands, even. I'm sorry for the poor devils. I'm not really a bloodthirsty fellow, but they will try to stand up against me. Say, where were you during the charge?" He looked sharply at Padway, like an accusatory chipmunk.

"I was supposed to be running the artillery. But my men ran off to join the fight. And by the time I arrived it was all over."

"*Aiw*, no doubt, no doubt. Like one time when I was in a battle with the Burgunds. My orders kept me out of the thick until it was nearly over. Of course, when I arrived I must have killed at least twenty—"

THE TRAIN of troops and prisoners headed north on the Latin Way. Padway, still a bit bewildered to find himself in command of the Gothic army, simply by virtue of having taken over Liuderis' responsibilities on the night of confusion,

rode near the front. The best are always the first to go, he thought sadly, remembering the simple, honest old Leuderis who lay dead in one of the wagons in the rear, and thinking of the mean and treacherous little king whom he had to manage when he got back to Rome.

Belisarius, jogging along beside him, was even less cheerful. The Imperial general was a surprisingly young man, in his middle thirties, tall and good-looking, with gray eyes and curly brown beard. His Slavic ancestry showed in his wide cheekbones.

He said gravely: "Excellent Martinus, I ought to thank you for the consideration you showed my wife. You went out of your way to make her comfortable on this sad journey."

"Quite all right, illustrious Belisarius. Maybe you'll capture me some day."

"That seems hardly likely, after this fiasco. By the way, if I may ask, just what are you? I hear you called Mysterious Martinus! You're no Goth, nor yet an Italian, by your speech."

Padway gave his impressively vague formula about America.

"Really? They must be a people skilled in war, these Americans. I knew when the fight started that I wasn't dealing with any barbarian commander. The timing was much too good, especially on that cavalry charge. *Phew!* I can still smell that damnable sulphur!"

Padway saw no point in explaining that his previous military experience consisted of one year of R. O. T. C. in a Chicago high school. He asked: "How would you like the idea of coming over to our side? We need a good general, and as Thiudahad's quæstor I'll have my hands full otherwise."

Belisarius frowned. "No. I swore an oath to Justinian."

"So you did. But as you'll probably hear, I can sometimes see a little into the future. And I can tell you that the more faithful you are to Justinian, the meaner and more ungrateful he'll be to you. He'll—"

"I said no!" said Belisarius sternly. "You can do what you like with me. But the word of Belisarius is not to be questioned."

Padway argued some more. But, remembering his Procopius, he had little hope of shaking the Thracian's stern rectitude. Belisarius was a fine fellow, but his rigid virtue made him a slightly uncomfortable companion. He asked: "Where's your secretary, Procopius of Cæsarea?"

"I don't know. He was in southern Italy, and supposedly on his way to join us."

"Good. We'll gather him in. We shall need a competent historian."

Belisarius' eyes widened. "How do you know about the histories he's collecting notes for? I thought he'd told nobody but me."

"Oh, I have ways. That's why they call me Mysterious Martinus."

XI.

Padway made one more attempt to shake Belisarius, but without success. He did, however, enlist five hundred of the Imperial cuirassiers as a personal guard. His share of the Imperialist loot would suffice to pay them for some weeks. After that he'd see.

The trip to Florence was anything but pleasant. It rained most of the way, with intermittent snow squalls as they climbed toward the City of Flowers. Being in a hurry, Padway took only cavalry.

In Florence he sent his officers around to buy warmer clothes for

the troops, and looked in on his business. It seemed to be thriving, though Fritharik said: "I don't trust any of them, excellent boss. I'm sure the foremen and this George Menandrus have been stealing, though I can't prove it. I don't understand all this writing and figuring. If you leave them alone long enough they'll steal everything, and then where'll we be? Out in the cold, headed for a pair of nameless graves."

"We'll see," said Padway. He called in the treasurer, Proclus Proclus, and asked to see the books. Proclus Proclus instantly looked apprehensive, but he got the books. Padway plunged into the figures. They were all nice and neat, since he himself had taught the treasurer double-entry bookkeeping. And—his employees were astounded to hear Padway burst into a shout of laughter.

"What . . . what is it, noble sir?" asked Proclus Proclus.

"Why, you poor fool, didn't you realize that with my system of bookkeeping, your little thefts would stick up in the accounts like a sore toe? Look here: thirty solidi last month, and nine solidi and some sesterces only last week. You might just as well have left a signed receipt every time you stole something!"

"What . . . what are you going to do to me?"

"Well—I *ought* to have you jailed and flogged." Padway sat silent for a while and watched Proclus Proclus squirm. "But I'd hate to have your family suffer. And I certainly oughtn't to keep you on, after this. But I'm pretty busy, and I can't take the time to train a new treasurer to keep books in a civilized manner. So I'll just take a third out of your salary until these little *borrowings* of yours are paid back."

"Thank you, thank you kindly, sir. But—just to be fair—George Menandrus ought to pay a share of it, too. He—"

"Liar!" shouted the editor.

"Liar yourself! Look, I can prove it. Here's an item for one solidus, November 10th. And on November 11th George shows up with a pair of new shoes and a bracelet. I know where he bought them. On the 15th—"

"How about it, George?" asked Padway.

Menandrus finally confessed, though he insisted that his thefts were merely temporary borrowings to tide him over until pay day.

Padway divided the total liability between the two of them. He warned them sternly against recidivism. Then he left a set of plans with the foreman for new machines and metal-working processes, including plans for a machine for spinning copper plate into bowls. The intelligent Nerva caught on immediately.

As Padway was leaving, Fritharik asked him: "Can't I go with you, excellent Martinus? It's very dull here in Florence. And you need somebody to take care of you. I've saved up almost enough to get my jeweled sword back, and if you'll let—"

"No, old man. I'm sorry, but I've got to have *one* person I can trust here. When this damned war and politics is over, we'll see."

Fritharik sighed gustily. "Oh, very well, if you insist. But I hate to think of you going around unprotected with all these treacherous Greeks and Italians and Goths. You'll end in an unmarked grave yet, I fear."

They shivered and skidded over the icy Appenines to Bologna. Padway resolved to have his men's

horses shod if he could ever get a few days to spare—stirrups had been invented but not horseshoes. From Bologna to Padua—still largely in ruins from its destruction by Attila's Huns—the road was no longer the splendid stone-paved affair they had been traveling on, but a track in the mud. However, the weather turned almost springlike, which was something.

At Padua they found they had missed the Dalmatian force by one day. Thiudahad wanted to halt. "Martinus," he whined, "you've dragged my old bones all over northern Italy, and nearly frozen me to death. That's not considerate. You do owe your king some consideration, don't you?"

Padway repressed his irritation with some effort. "My lord, *do* you or *don't* you want your crown back?"

So poor Thiudahad had to go along. By hard riding they caught up with the Dalmatian army halfway to Atria. They trotted past thousands and thousands of Goths, afoot and horseback. There must have been well over fifty thousand of them. And these big, tough-looking men had skedaddled at the mere rumor that Count Constantinus was approaching.

The count had had only a small force, but, of course, Padway was the only one present who knew that, and his source of information was not strictly kosher. The Goths cheered Thiudahad and Padway's Gothic lancers, and stared and muttered at the five hundred cuirassiers. Padway had made his guard don Gothic helmets and Italian military cloaks in lieu of the spiked steel caps and burnooselike mantles they had worn. But still their shaven chins, tight pants, and high yellow boots made them sufficiently different to arouse suspicion.

Padway found the two commanders up near the head of the column. Asinar was tall and Grippas was short, but otherwise they were just a couple of middle-aged and bewhiskered barbarians. They respectfully saluted Thiudahad, who seemed to cringe slightly from so much latent force. Thiudahad introduced Padway.

Asinar said to Padway: "In Padua we heard a rumor that a civil war and usurpation had been going on in Italy. Just what *is* the news, anyway?"

Padway was for once thankful that his telegraph hadn't been operating that far north. He laughed scornfully. "Oh, our brave General Wittigis got a brainstorm a couple of weeks ago. He shut himself up in Ravenna, where the Greeks couldn't get him, and had himself proclaimed king. We've cleaned up the Greeks, and are on our way to settle with Wittigis now. Your boys will be a help." All of which was rather unjust to Wittigis.

Padway wondered whether there'd be anything left of his character after a few years in this mendacious atmosphere. Anyway, the two Gothic generals accepted his statement without comment. Padway decided quickly that neither of them could be called exactly bright.

They marched into Ravenna at noon the day after next. The fog was so thick about the northern causeway that a man had to precede the leading horsemen on foot to keep them from blundering off into the marsh.

There was some alarm in Ravenna when the force appeared out of the fog. Padway and Thiudahad prudently kept quiet while Asinar and Grippas identified themselves. As a result, most of the huge force

was in the city before somebody noticed the little gray man in spectacles. Immediately there were shouts and runnings to and fro.

Presently a Goth in a rich red cloak ran out to the head of the column. He shouted: "What the devil's going on here? Have you captured Thiudahad, or is it the other way around?"

Asinar and Grippas sat on their horses and said: "Uh . . . well . . . that is—"

Padway spurred up front and asked: "Who are you, my dear sir?"

"If it's any of your business, I'm Unilas Wiljarith's son, general to our lord Wittigis, King of the Goths and Italians. Now who are *you?*"

Padway grinned and replied smoothly: "I'm delighted to know you, General Unilas. I'm Martinus Paduei, quæstor to our lord Thiudahad, King of the Goths and Italians. Now that we know each other—"

"But, you fool, there isn't any King Thiudahad! He was deposed! We've got a new king! Or hadn't you heard about it?"

"Oh, I've heard lots of things. But, my excellent Unilas, before you make any more rude remarks, consider that we—that is to say King Thiudahad—have over sixty thousand troops in Ravenna, whereas you have about twelve thousand. You don't want any unnecessary unpleasantness, do you?"

"Why, you impudent . . . you . . . uh . . . did you say *sixty* thousand?"

"Maybe seventy; I haven't counted them."

"Oh. That's different."

"I thought you'd see it that way."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, if you can tell me where *General* Wittigis is, I thought we might pay him a call."

"He's getting married today. I think he ought to be on his way to St. Vitalis Church about now."

"You mean he hasn't married Mathasuentha yet?"

"No. There was some delay in getting his divorce."

"Quick, how do you get to St. Vitalis Church?"

Padway hadn't hoped to be in time to interfere with Wittigis' attempt to engraft himself on the Amal family tree by his forcible marriage of the late Queen Amalasuentha's daughter. But this was too good an opportunity to let slip. Unilas pointed out a dome flanked by two towers. Padway shouted to his guard and kicked his horse into a canter. The five hundred men galloped after, spattering unfortunate pedestrains with mud. They thundered across a bridge over one of Ravenna's canals, the stench from which fully lived up to its reputation, and up to the door of St. Vitalis Church.

There were a score of guards at the door, through which organ music wafted faintly. The guards brought their spears up to "poise."

Padway reined in and turned to the commander of his guard, a big Macedonian named Achilleus. "Cover them," he snapped.

There was a quick, concerted movement among the guards, who had been sorting themselves into a semicircle in front of the church door. The next instant the guards were looking at a hundred stiff Byzantine bows drawn to the cheek.

"*Nu,*" said Padway in Gothic, "if you boys will put your stickers down and your hands up, we have an appointment— Ah, that's better. Much better." He slid off his horse. "Achilleus, give me a troop.

Then surround the church, and keep those in in and those out out until I finish with Wittigis."

He marched into St. Vitalis Church with a hundred cuirassiers at his heels. The organ music died with a wail, and people turned to look at him. It took his eyes a few seconds to become accustomed to the gloom. In the center of the huge octagon was a pickle-faced Arian bishop, and three people stood before him. One was a big man in a long, rich robe, with a crown on his dark graying hair: King Wittigis. Another was a tallish girl with a strawberries-and-cream complexion and her hair in thick golden braids: Mathasuentha. The third was an ordinary Gothic soldier, somewhat cleaned up, who stood beside the bride and held her arm behind her back. The audience consisted of a handful of Gothic nobles and their ladies.

Padway walked very purposefully down the aisle, *thump, thump, thump*. People squirmed and rustled in their seats and murmured: "The Greeks! The Greeks are in Ravenna!"

The bishop spoke up: "Young man, what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"You'll soon learn, my lord bishop. Since when has the Arian faith countenanced the taking of a woman to wife against her will?"

"What's that? Who is being taken against her will? What business is this wedding of yours? Who are you, who dares interrupt—"

Padway laughed his most irritating laugh. "One question at a time, please. I'm Martinus Paduei, quæstor to King Thiudahad. Ravenna is in our hands, and prudent persons will comport themselves accordingly. As for the wedding, it isn't normally necessary to assign a man to twist the bride's arm to make sure she gives the right answers. You don't want to marry this man, do you, my lady?"

Mathasuentha jerked her arm away from the soldier, who had been relaxing his grip. She made a fist and punched him in the nose with enough force to rock his head back on its hinges. Then she swung at Wittigis, who dodged back. "You beast!" she cried. "I'll claw your eyes—"

The bishop grabbed her arm. "Calm yourself, my daughter! Please! In the house of God—"

King Wittigis had been blinking at Padway, gradually soaking in the news. Mathasuentha's attack seemingly shocked him out of his lethargy. He growled: "You're trying to tell me that that miserable pen pusher, Thiudahad, has taken the town? *My* town?"

"That, my lord, is the general idea. I fear you'll have to give up your idea of becoming an Amal and ruling the Goths. But we'll—"

Wittigis' face had been turning darker and darker red. Now he burst into a shocking roar. "You swine!" he yelled. "You think I'll hand over my crown and my bride peaceably? I'll see you in the hottest hell first." As he spoke he whipped out his sword and ran heavily at Padway, his gold-embroidered robe flapping.

Padway was not entirely taken by surprise. He got his own sword out and parried Wittigis' terrific downward cut easily enough, though the force of the blow almost disarmed him. Then he found himself chest to chest with the Goth, hugging the barrel torso and chewing Wittigis' pepper-and-salt beard. He tried to shout to his men, but it was like

trying to talk with a mouthful of shredded wheat.

He spat out, it seemed, half a bale of the stuff. "Grab . . . *gffth* . . . *pffth* . . . grab him, boys! Don't hurt him!"

That was easier said than done. Wittigis struggled like a captive gorilla, even when five men were hanging onto him, and he bellowed and foamed all the while. The Gothic gentlemen were standing up, some with hands on their sword hilts, but being in a hopeless minority, none seemed anxious to die for his king just then. Wittigis began to sob between roars.

"Tie him up until he cools off," said Padway unfeelingly. "My lord bishop, may I trouble you for pen and paper?"

The bishop looked bleakly at Padway, and called a sexton, who led Padway to a room off the vestibule. Here he sat down and wrote:

Martinus Paduei to Thomasus the Syrian, Greetings.

My dear Thomasus: I am sending you with this letter the person of Wittigis, former King of the Goths and Italians. His escort has orders to deliver him to your house secretly, so forgive me for any alarm they cause you if they get you out of bed.

As I remember, we have a telegraph tower under construction on the Flaminian Way near Helvillum. Please arrange to have a chamber constructed in the earth underneath this tower and fitted up as an apartment forthwith. Incarcerate Wittigis therein with an adequate guard. Have him made as comfortable as possible, as I judge him a man of moody temperament, and I do not wish him to harm himself.

The utmost secrecy is to be observed at all times. That should not be too difficult, as this tower is in a wild stretch of country. It would be advisable to have Wittigis delivered to the tower by guards other than those who take him to Rome, and to have him guarded by men who speak neither Latin nor Gothic. They shall release their prisoner only on my order, delivered either in person or via the telegraph, or without orders in the event of my imprisonment or death.

With best regards,

MARTINUS PADUEI.

THIUDAHAD polished his spectacles and peered moistly at Padway. "Marvelous, marvelous, my dear Martinus. The Royal Council accepted the inevitable. The only trouble is that the evil usurper had my crown altered to fit his big head; I'll have to alter it back. Now I can devote my time to some real scholarly research. Let's see—there was something else I wanted to ask you. Oh, yes, what did you do with Wittigis?

Padway put on a benign smile. "He's out of your reach, my lord king."

"You mean you killed him? Now, that's too bad! Most inconsiderate of you, Martinus. I told you I'd promised myself a nice long session with him in the torture chambers—"

"No, he's alive. Very much so."

"What? What? Then produce him, at once!"

Padway shook his head. "He's where you'll never find him. You see, I figured it would be foolish to waste a good spare king. If anything happened to you, I might need one in a hurry."

"You're insubordinate, young man! I won't stand for it! You'll do as your king orders you, or else—"

Padway grinned, shaking his head. "No, my lord. Nobody shall hurt Wittigis. And you'd better not get rough with me, either. His guards have orders to release him if anything happens to me. He doesn't like you any better than you like him. You can figure the rest out yourself."

"You devil!" spat the king ven-

omously. "Why, oh, why did I ever let you save my life? I haven't had a moment's peace since. You might have a little consideration for an old man," he whined. "Let's see, what was I talking about?"

"Perhaps," said Padway, "about the new book we're going to get out in our joint names. It has a perfectly splendid theory, about the mutual attraction of masses. Accounts for the movement of the heavenly bodies, and all sorts of things. It's called the law of gravitation."

"Really? Now, that's most interesting, Martinus, most interesting. It would spread my fame as a philosopher to the ends of the earth, wouldn't it?"

PADWAY ASKED Unilas if Wittigis' nephew, Urias, was in Ravenna. Unilas said yes, and sent a man to hunt him up.

Urias was big and dark like his uncle. He arrived scowling defiantly. "Well, Mysterious Martinus, now that you've overthrown my uncle by trickery, what are you going to do with me?"

"Not a thing," said Padway. "Unless you force me to."

"Aren't you having a purge of my uncle's family?"

"No. I'm not even purging your uncle. In strict confidence, I'm hiding Wittigis to keep Thiudahad from harming him."

"Really? Can I believe that?"

"Sure. I'll even get a letter from him, testifying to the good treatment he's getting."

"Letters can be produced by torture."

"Not with Wittigis. For all your uncle's faults, I think you'll agree that he's a stubborn chap."

Urias relaxed visibly. "That's something. Yes, if that's true, perhaps you have some decency, after all."

"Now to get down to business. How do you feel about working for us—that is, nominally for Thiudahad but actually for me?"

Urias stiffened. "Out of the question. I'm resigning my commission, of course. I won't take any action disloyal to my uncle."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I need a good man to command the reoccupation of Dalmatia."

Urias shook his head stubbornly. "It's a question of loyalty. I've never gone back on my plighted word yet."

Padway sighed. "You're as bad as Belisarius. The few truthworthy and able men in this world won't work with me because of previous obligations. So I have to struggle along with crooks and dimwits."

Darkness seemed to want to fall by mere inertia—

XII.

LITTLE BY LITTLE Ravenna's nonce population flowed away, like trickles of water from a wet sponge on a tile floor. A big trickle flowed north, as fifty thousand Goths marched back toward Dalmatia. Padway prayed that Asinar, who seemed to have a little more glimmering of intelligence than Grippas, would not have another brainstorm and come rushing back to Italy before he'd accomplished anything.

Padway finally found time to pay his respects to Mathasuentha. He told himself that he was merely being polite and making a useful contact. But he knew that actually he didn't want to leave Ravenna without another look at the luscious wench.

The Gothic princess received him graciously. She spoke excellent

Latin, in a rich voice vibrant with good health. "I thank you, excellent Martinus, for saving me from that beast. I shall never be able to repay you properly."

They walked into her living room. Padway found that it was no effort at all to keep in step with her. But then, she was almost as tall as he was.

"It was very little, my lady," he said. "We just happened to arrive at an opportune time."

"Don't deprecate yourself, Martinus. I know about you. It takes a real man to accomplish all you have. Especially when one considers that you arrived in Italy, a stranger, only a little over a year ago."

"I do what I must, princess. It may seem impressive to others, but to me it's more as if I had been forced into each action by circumstances, regardless of my intentions."

"A fatalistic doctrine, Martinus. I could almost believe that you're a pagan. Not that I'd mind."

Padway laughed. "Hardly. I understand that you can still find pagans if you hunt around the Italian hills."

"No doubt. I should like to visit some of the little villages some day. With a good guide, of course."

"I ought to be a pretty good guide, after the amount of running around I've done in the last couple of months."

"Would you take me? Be careful; I'll hold you to it, you know."

"That doesn't worry me any, princess. But it would have to be some day. At the present rate, God knows when I'll get time for anything but war and politics, neither of which is my proper trade."

"What is, then?"

"I was a gatherer of facts; a kind of historian of periods that had no history. I suppose you could call me a historical philosopher."

"You're a fascinating person, Martinus. I can see why they call you Mysterious. But if you don't like war and politics, why do you engage in them?"

"That would be hard to explain, my lady. In the course of my work in my own country, I had occasion to study the rise and fall of many civilizations. In looking around me here, I see many symptoms of a fall."

"Really? That's a strange thing to say. Of course, my own people, and barbarians like the Franks, have occupied most of the western empire. But they're not a danger to civilization. They protect it from the real wild men like the Bulgarian Huns and the Slavs. I can't think of a time when our western culture was more secure."

"You're entitled to your opinion, my lady," said Padway. "I merely put together such facts as I have, and draw what conclusions I can. Facts such as the decline in the population of Italy, despite the Gothic immigrations. And such things as the volume of shipping."

"Shipping? I never thought of measuring civilization *that* way. But in any event, that doesn't answer my question."

"*Triggws*, to use one of your own Gothic words. Well, I want to prevent the darkness of barbarism from falling over western Europe. It sounds conceited, the idea that one man could do anything like that. But I can try. One of the weaknesses of our present set-up is slow communication. So I promote the telegraph company. And because my backers are Roman patricians suspected of Græcophile leanings, I find myself in politics up to my

The Goth's huge sword came up; miraculously Padway succeeded in catching it on his own sword—to have his only weapon go whirling away from his hand!

neck. One thing leads to another, until today I'm practically running Italy."

MATHASUENTHA looked thoughtful. "I suppose the trouble with slow communication is that a general can revolt or an invader overrun the border weeks before the central government hears about it."

"Right. I can see you're your mother's daughter. If I wanted to patronize you, I should say that you had a man's mind."

She smiled. "On the contrary, I should be very much pleased. At least, if you mean a man like yourself. Most of the men around here —*bah!* Squalling infants, without one idea among them. When I marry, it must be to a man—shall we say both of thought and action?"

Padway met her eyes, and was aware that his heart had stepped up several beats per minute. "I hope you find him, princess."

"I may yet." She sat up straight and looked at him directly, almost defiantly, quite unconcerned with the inner confusion she was causing him. He noticed that sitting up straight didn't make her look any less desirable. On the contrary. She continued: "That's one reason I'm so grateful to you for saving me from the beast. Of all these thick-headed ninnies he had the thickest head. What became of him, by the way? Don't pretend innocence, Martinus. Everybody knows your guards took him into the vestibule of the church, and then he apparently vanished."

"He's safe, I hope, both from our point of view and his."

"You mean you hid him? Death would have been safer yet."

"I had reasons for not wanting him killed."

"You did? I give you fair warning that if he ever falls into my hands, I shall not have such reasons."

"Aren't you a bit hard on poor old Wittigis? He was merely trying, in his own muddle-headed way, to defend the kingdom."

"Perhaps. But after that performance in the church I hate him." The gray eyes were cold as ice. "And when I hate, I don't do it half-way."

"So I see," said Padway dryly, jarred out of the pink fog for the moment. But then Mathasuentha smiled again, all curvesome and desirable woman. "You'll stay to dinner, of course? There will only be a few people, and they'll leave early."

"Why—" There were piles of work to be done that evening. And he needed to catch up on his sleep—a chronic condition with him. "Thank you, my lady. I shall be delighted."

BY HIS third visit to Mathasuentha, Padway was saying to himself: There's a real woman. Ravishing good looks, forceful character, keen brain. The man who gets her will have one in a million. Why shouldn't I be the one? She seems to like me. With her to back me up, there's nothing I couldn't accomplish. Of course, she *is* a bit bloodthirsty. You wouldn't exactly describe her as a "sweet" girl. But that's the fault of the times, not of her. She'll settle down when she has a man of her own to do her fighting for her.

In other words, Padway was as thoroughly in love as such a rational and prudent man ever can be.

But how did one go about marrying a Gothic princess? You certainly didn't take her out in an automobile and kiss her lipstick off by way of a starter. Nor did you begin

by knowing her in high school, the way he'd known Betty. She was an orphan, so you couldn't approach her old man. He supposed the only thing to do would be to bring the subject up, a little at a time, and see how she reacted.

So he asked: "Mathasuentha, my dear, when you spoke of the kind of man you'd like to marry, did you have any other specifications in mind?"

She smiled at him, whereat the room swam slightly. "Curious, Martinus? I didn't have many, aside from those I mentioned. Of course, he shouldn't be *too* much older than I, as Wittigis was. And he should be reasonably sound and normal physically."

"You wouldn't mind if he wasn't much taller than you?"

"No, unless he were a mere shrimp."

"You haven't any objection to large noses?"

She laughed a rich, throaty laugh. "Martinus, you *are* the funniest man. I suppose it's just that you and I are different. I go directly for what I want, whether it's love, or revenge, or anything else. You like to walk all around it, and peer at it from every angle, and then spend a week figuring out whether you want it badly enough to risk taking it. But I like you for it. I might even learn to love you for it, with a little practice, my cautious friend. That's what you were getting at, wasn't it?"

Padway was conscious of a great relief. This marvelous woman knew your difficulties and went out of her way to ease them for you! "As a matter of fact, it was, princess."

"You needn't be so frightfully respectful, Martinus. Anybody would know you were a foreigner, the way you meticulously use all the proper titles and complimentary epithets. I'd much rather you came over here and kissed me. Or isn't that done in America?"

Padway didn't answer, but did as suggested. Mathasuentha opened her eyes, blinked, and shook her head. "That was a foolish question, my dear Martinus. It seems that the Americans are way ahead of us." She laughed happily, and Padway laughed, too. He felt better than he had in years.

"Of course," she said, frowning slightly, "there are a lot of questions to be settled before we decide anything finally. Wittigis, for instance."

"What about him?" Padway's happiness suddenly wasn't quite so perfect.

"He'll have to be killed, naturally."

"Oh?"

"Don't 'oh' me, my dear. I warned you that I'm no half-hearted hater. And Thiudahad, too."

"Why him?"

She straightened up, almost angry. "He had my mother murdered, didn't he? How much more reason do you want for revenge? And while we're about it we'd better make a clean sweep of Thiudahad's family. There's his wife Gudelinda, and his son Thiudegiskel. His daughter Thiudenanthe is out of our reach, unfortunately. She's gone to Constantinople with that coward Evermuth. But there are a lot of cousins and nephews who ought to be disposed of. We can give them the boon of easy deaths. But for Thiudahad himself"—the gray eyes were terrible—"I insist on one that is *not* easy."

THE LITTLE cold spot in Padway's stomach spread and spread. He relaxed his arm from around the girl. "But . . . but—"

"It's not a matter for humane sentiments, Martinus. Having killed one, we must get rid of the relatives before they combine against *us*."

Padway's face was as blank as that of a renting agent at the mention of cockroaches. But his mind was in a whirl. If every time you killed one you had to kill all his relatives, and then all their relatives —there would be no end to killing. His underwear was damp with cold sweat. Suddenly he knew he wasn't in the least in love with Mathasuentha. Let some roaring Goth have this fierce blond Valkyr. Her Latin culture was deceptive; it was a mere veneer over a deep substratum of purest barbarism. He preferred a girl who didn't want to eat people she disliked for breakfast. And no insurance man would give a life policy on a member of the Amal family, if he remembered their dark and bloody history.

"Well?" said Mathasuentha.

"I was thinking," replied Padway. He didn't say that he was thinking, frantically, how to get out of this fix. If he tried to back out—a woman scorned—she'd have *him* assassinated, sure as shooting.

"I just remembered," he said slowly. "I've got a wife, back in America."

"Oh. This is a fine time to think of *that*," she said coldly.

"I haven't seen her for a long time."

"Well then, there's divorce, isn't there?"

"Not in my religion. We Congregationalists believe there's a special compartment of hell for frying divorced persons."

"You're sure you're not just scared and trying to back out?"

"Not at all, my dear. I'd wade through rivers of blood to reach your side."

"Hm-m-m. A very pretty speech, Martinus Paduei. If you haven't seen her for so long, how do you know she's alive?"

"I don't. But I don't know that she isn't. And you know how strict your laws are about bigamy. Confiscation of all property, Edicts of Athalarik, paragraph six. I once looked it up."

"You would," she said with some bitterness.

"Of course, I might send a messenger to America to find out. It would take some time."

"I'd wait. That is, if you're serious and not trying to wriggle out." She brightened. "Look here, why couldn't you instruct the messenger, if he finds her alive, to poison her? Things like that can always be managed discreetly."

"I'm sorry, my dear, but *we* don't do things that way." He stood up. "I'll send this messenger off the first thing. And tomorrow I leave for Rome. State business, you know. I'll think of you all the way." When she got up he kissed her, not too perfunctorily. "Be brave, my dear. It may be a long wait, you know. I hate it as much as you do. But it takes strong characters like ours to bear up under it. Smile, now."

She smiled, a trifle tearfully, and hugged him with disconcerting violence.

When Padway got back to his quarters, he hauled his orderly, an Armenian cuirassier, out of bed. "Put on your right boot," he ordered.

The man rubbed his eyes. "My *right* boot? Do I understand you, noble sir?"

"You do. Quickly, now." When the yellow rawhide boot was on, Padway turned his back to the orderly and bent over. He said over his shoulder: "You will give me a

swift kick in the fundament, my good Tirdat."

Tirdat's mouth fell open. "*Kick my commander?*"

"You heard me the first time. Go ahead. Now."

Tirdat shuffled uneasily, but at Padway's glare he finally hauled off and let fly. The kick almost sent Padway sprawling. He straightened up, rubbing the spot. "Thank you, Tirdat. You may go back to bed." He started for the wash bowl to brush his teeth with a willow twig. (Must start the manufacture of real toothbrushes one of these days, he thought.) He felt much better.

But Padway didn't get off to Rome the next day, or even the day after that. He began to learn that the position of king's quæstor wasn't just a nice well-paying job that let you order people around and do as you pleased. First Wakis Thurumund's son, a Gothic noble of the Royal Council, came around with a rough draft of a proposed amendment to the law against horse stealing.

Padway wondered what the devil to do; then he dug up Cassiodorus, who as head of the Italian Civil Service ought to know the ropes. The old scholar proved a great help, though Padway saw fit to edit some of the unnecessarily flowery phrases of the prefect's draft.

He asked Urias around for lunch. Urias came and was friendly enough, though still somewhat bitter about the treatment of his uncle Wittigis. Padway liked him. He thought, I can't hold out on Mathasuentha indefinitely. And I shan't dare take up with another girl while she looks on me as a suitor. But this fellow is big and good-looking, and he seems intelligent. If I could engineer a match—

He asked Urias whether he was married. Urias raised eyebrows. "No. Why?"

"I just wondered. What do you intend to do with yourself now?"

"I don't know. Go rusticate on my land in Picenum, I suppose. It'll be a dull life, after the soldiering I've been doing the last few years."

Padway asked casually: "Have you ever met the Princess Mathasuentha?"

"Not formally. I arrived in Ravenna only a few days ago for the wedding. I saw her in the church, of course, when you barged in. She's attractive, isn't she?"

"Quite so. She's a person worth knowing. If you like, I'll try to arrange a meeting."

Padway, as soon as Urias had gone, rushed around to Mathasuentha's house. He contrived to make his arrival look as unpremeditated as possible. He started to explain: "I've been delayed, my dear. I may not get off to Rome *ubbb*—" Mathasuentha had slid her arms around his neck and stopped his little speech in the most effective manner. Padway didn't dare seem tepid, but that wasn't at all difficult. The only trouble was that it made coherent thought impossible, at a time when he wanted all his craft. An the passionate wench seemed satisfied to stand in the vestibule and kiss him all afternoon.

She finally said: "Now, what were you saying, my dearest?"

Padway finished his statement. "So I thought I'd drop in for a moment." He laughed. "It's just as well I'm going to Rome; I shall never get any work done as long as I'm in the same city with you. Do you know Wittigis' nephew Urias by the way?"

"No. And I'm not sure I want to.

When we kill Wittigis, we shall naturally have to consider killing his nephews, too. I have a silly prejudice against having people I know socially murdered."

"Oh, my dear, I think that's a mistake. He's a splendid young man; you'd really like him. He's one Goth with both brains and character; probably the only one."

"Well, I don't know—"

"And I need him in my business, only he's got scruples against working for me. I thought maybe you could work your flashing smile on him; to soften him up a bit."

"If you think I could really help you, perhaps—"

Thus the Gothic princess had Padway and Urias for company at dinner that night. Mathasuentha was pretty cool to Urias at first. But they drank a good deal of wine, and she unbent. Urias was good company. Presently they were all laughing uproariously at his imitation of a drunken Hun, and at Padway's hastily translated off-color stories. Padway taught the other two a Greek popular song that Tirdat, his orderly, had brought from Constantinople. If Padway hadn't been conscious of a small gnawing anxiety for the success of his various plots, he'd have said he was having the best time of his life.

XIII.

Back in Rome, Padway went to see his captive Imperial generals. They were comfortably housed and seemed well enough pleased with their situation, though Belisarius was moody and abstracted. Enforced inactivity didn't sit well with the former commander in chief.

Padway asked him: "As you can learn easily enough, we shall soon have a powerful state here. Have you changed your mind about joining us?"

"No, my lord-quæstor, I have not. An oath is an oath."

"Have you ever broken an oath in your life?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"If for any reason you should swear an oath to me, I suppose you'd consider yourself as firmly bound by it as by the others, wouldn't you?"

"Naturally. But that's a ridiculous supposition."

"Perhaps. How would it be if I offered you parole and transportation back to Constantinople, on condition that you would never again bear arms against the kingdom of the Goths and Italians?"

"You're a crafty and resourceful man, Martinus. I thank you for the offer, but I couldn't square it with my oath to Justinian. Therefore I must decline."

Padway repeated his offer to the other generals. Constantinus, Perianus, and Bessas accepted at once. Padway's reasoning was as follows: These three were just fair-to-middling commanders. Justinian could get plenty more of that kind, so there was not much point in keeping them. Of course they'd violate their oaths as soon as they were out of his reach. But Belisarius was a real military genius; he mustn't be allowed to fight against the kingdom again. Either he'd have to come over, or give his parole—which he alone would keep—or be kept in detention.

On the other hand, Justinian's clever but slightly warped mind was unreasonably jealous of Belisarius' success and his somewhat stuffy virtue. When he learned that Belisarius had stayed behind in Rome rather than give a parole that he'd be expected to break, the emperor

might be sufficiently annoyed to do something interesting.

Padway wrote:

King Thiudahad to the Emperor Justinian, Greetings.

Your serene highness: We send you with this letter the persons of your generals Constantinus, Perianus, and Bessas, under parole not to bear arms against us again. A similar parole was offered your general Belisarius, but he declined to accept in on grounds of his personal honor.

As continuation of this war seems unlikely to achieve any constructive result, we take the opportunity of stating the terms that we should consider reasonable for the establishment of enduring peace between us.

1. Imperial troops shall evacuate Sicily and Dalmatia forthwith.

2. An indemnity of one hundred thousand solidi in gold shall be paid us for damages done by your invading armies.

3. One hundred skilled smiths and smelters shall be sent us from the ironworks at Damascus, under contract for one year, salaries paid in advance.

4. We shall agree never again to make war, one upon the other, without mutual consultation in advance. Details can be settled in due course.

5. We shall agree not to assist any third parties, by men, money, or munitions, which hereafter shall make war upon either of us.

6. We shall agree upon a commercial treaty to facilitate the exchange of goods between our respective realms.

This is of course a very rough outline, details of which would have to be settled by conference between our representatives. We think you will agree that these terms, or others very similar in intent, are the least that we could reasonably ask under the circumstances.

We shall anticipate the gracious favor of a reply at your serenity's earliest convenience.

by Martinus Paduel, Quæstor.

When he saw who his visitor was, Thomasus got up with a grunt and waddled toward him, good eye sparkling and hand outstretched. "Martinus! It's good to see you again. How does it feel to be important?"

"Wearisome," said Padway, shaking hands vigorously. "What's the news?"

"News? News? Listen to that! He's been making most of the news in Italy for the past two months, and he wants to know what the news is!"

"I mean about our little bird in a cage."

"Huh? Oh, you mean"—Thomasus looked around cautiously—"ex-King Wittigis? He was doing fine at last reports, though nobody's been able to get a civil word out of him. Listen, Martinus, of all the lousy tricks I ever heard of, springing the job of hiding him on me without warning was the worst. I'm sure God agrees with me, too. Those soldiers dragged me out of bed, and then I had them and their prisoner around the house for several days."

"I'm sorry, Thomasus. But you were the only man in Rome I felt I could trust absolutely."

"Oh, well, if you put it that way. But Wittigis was the worst grouch I ever saw. Nothing suited him."

"How's the telegraph company coming?"

"That's another thing. The Naples line is working regularly. But the lines to Ravenna and Florence won't be finished for a month, and until they are there's no chance of a profit. *And* the minority stockholders have discovered that they're a minority. You should have heard them howl! They're after your blood. At first Count Honorius was with them. He threatened to jail Vardan and Ebenezer and me if we didn't sell him—give him, practically—a controlling interest. But we learned he needed money worse than he needed the stock, and bought his from him. So the other

patricians have to be satisfied with snubbing us when they pass us in the street."

"I'm going to start another paper as soon as I get time," said Padway. "There'll be two, one in Rome and one in Florence."

"Why one in Florence?"

"That's where our new capital's going to be."

"*What?*"

"Yes. It's better located than Rome, and it has a much better climate than Ravenna. In fact I can't think of a place that *hasn't* a better climate than Ravenna, hell included. I sold the idea to Cassiodorus, and between us we got Thiudahad to agree to move the administrative offices thither. If Thiudahad wants to hold court in the City of Fogs, Bogs, and Frogs, that's his lookout. I'll be just as glad not to have him in my hair."

"In your hair? Oh, ho-ho-ho, you *are* the funniest fellow, Martinus. I wish I could say things the way you do. But all this activity takes my breath away. What else of revolutionary nature are you planning?"

"I'm going to try to start a school. We have a flock of teachers on the public pay roll now, but all they know is grammar and rhetoric. I'm going to try to have things taught that really matter: mathematics, and the sciences, and medicine. I see where I shall have to write all the textbooks myself."

"Just one question, Martinus. When do you find time to sleep?"

Padway grinned wanly. "Mostly I don't. But if I can ever get out of all this political and military activity I hope to catch up. I don't really like it, but it's a necessary means to an end. The end is things like the telegraph and the presses. My politicking and soldiering may not make any difference a hundred years from now, but the other things will, I hope."

In Florence, Padway leased office space in the name of the government, and looked in on his own business. Fritharik renewed his plea to be allowed to come along, showing with much pride his jeweled sword, which he had redeemed and had sent up from Rome. The sword disappointed Padway, though he didn't say so. The gems were merely polished, not cut; faceting hadn't been invented. But wearing it seemed to add inches to Fritharik's already imposing stature. Padway, somewhat against his better judgment, gave in, appointing the competent and apparently honest Nerva his general manager.

They were snowed in for two days by a late storm crossing the mountains, and arrived in Ravenna still shivering. The town with its clammy atmosphere and its currents of intrigue depressed him, and the Mathasuentha problem made him nervous. He called on her, of course, and made some insincere love to her, which made him all the more anxious to get away. But there was lots of public business to be handled.

Urias announced that he was ready and willing to enter Padway's service. "Mathasuentha talked me into it," he said. "She's a wonderful woman, isn't she?"

"Certainly is," replied Padway. He thought he detected a faintly guilty and furtive air about the straightforward Urias when he spoke of the princess. He smiled to himself. "What I had in mind was setting up a regular military school for the Gothic officers, somewhat on the Byzantine model, with you in charge."

"What? Oh, my word, I hoped

you'd have a command on the frontiers for me."

So, thought Padway, he wasn't the only one who disliked Ravenna. "No, my dear sir. This job has to be done for the sake of the kingdom. And I can't do it myself, because the Goths don't think any non-Goth knows anything about soldiering. On the other hand I need a literate and intelligent man to run the thing, and you're the only one in sight."

"But, most excellent Martinus, have you ever tried to teach a Gothic officer anything? I admit that an academy is needed, but—"

"I know, I know. Most of them can't read or write and look down on those who do. That's why I picked *you* for the job. You're respected, and if anybody can put sense into their heads you can." He grinned sympathetically. "I wouldn't have tried so hard to enlist your services if I'd had just an easy, everyday job in mind."

"Thanks. I see you know how to get people to do things for you."

Padway went on to tell Urias some of his ideas: How the Goths' great weakness was the lack of coordination between their mounted lancers and their foot archers; how they needed both reliable foot spearmen and mounted archers to have a well-rounded force. He also described the crossbow, the calthorp, and other military devices.

"It takes five years to make a good long-bowman, whereas a recruit can learn to handle a crossbow in a few weeks.

"And if I can get some good steel workers, I'll show you a suit of plate armor that weighs only half what one of these scale-mail shirts does, but gives better protection and allows fully as much freedom of action." He grinned. "You may expect grumbling at all these newfangled ideas from the more conservative Goths. So you'd better introduce them gradually. And remember, they're your ideas; I won't try to deprive you of the credit for them."

"I understand," grinned Urias. "So if anybody gets hanged for them, it'll be me and not you. Like that book on astronomy that came out in Thiudahad's name. It has every churchman from here to Persia foaming. Poor old Thiudahad gets the blame, but *I* know you furnished the ideas and put him up to it. Very well, my mysterious friend, I'm game."

Padway himself was surprised when Urias appeared with a very respectable crossbow a few days later. Although the device was simple enough, and he'd furnished an adequate set of drawings for it, he knew from sad experience that to get a sixth-century artisan to make something he'd never seen before, you had to stand over him while he botched six attempts and then make it yourself.

They spent an afternoon in the great pine wood east of the city shooting at marks. Fritharik, who was along, proved uncannily accurate, though he affected to despise missle weapons as unworthy of a noble Vandal knight. "But," he said, "it is a remarkably easy thing to aim."

"Yes," replied Padway. "Among my people there's a legend about a crossbowman who offended a government official, and was compelled as punishment to shoot an apple off his son's head. He did so, without harming the boy."

When he got back, Padway learned that he had an appointment the next day with an envoy from the Franks. The envoy, one Count

Hlodovik, was a tall, lantern-jawed man. Like most Franks he was clean shaven except for the mustache, and wore his hair in long braids. He was quite gorgeous in a red silk tunic, gold chains and bracelets, and a jeweled baldric. Padway privately thought that the knobby bare legs below his short pants detracted from his impressiveness. Moreover, Hlodovik was rather obviously suffering from a hangover.

"I'm thirsty," he said. "Will you please do something about that, friend quæstor, before we discuss business?" So Padway had some wine sent in. Hlodovik drank in deep gulps. "Ah! That's better. Now, friend quæstor, I may say that I don't think I've been very well treated here. The king would only see me for a wink of the eye; said you'd handle the business. Is that the proper reception for the envoy of King Theudebert, King Hildebert and King Hlotokar? Not just *one* king, mind, you; *three*."

"That's a lot of kings," said Padway, smiling pleasantly. "I am greatly impressed. But you mustn't take offense, my lord count. Our king is an old man, and he finds the press of public business hard to bear."

"So, *hrrmp*. We'll forget about it, then. But we shall not find the reason for my coming hither so easy to forget. Briefly, what became of that hundred and fifty thousand solidi that Wittigis promised my masters, King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar if they wouldn't attack him while he was involved with the Greeks? Moreover, he ceded Provence to my masters, King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar. Yet your general Sisigis has not evacuated Provence. When my masters sent a force to occupy it a few weeks ago, they were driven back and several were killed. You should know that the Franks, who are the bravest and proudest people on earth, will never submit to such treatment. What are you going to do about it?"

"*You*, my lord Hlodovik, should know that the acts of an unsuccessful usurper cannot bind the legitimate government. We intend to hold what we have. So you may inform your masters, King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar, that there will be no payment and no evacuation."

"Do you really mean that?" Hlodovik seemed astonished. "Don't you know, young man, that the armies of the Franks could sweep the length of Italy, burning and ravaging, any time they wished? My masters, King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar, are showing great forbearance and humanity by offering you a way out. Think carefully before you invite disaster."

"I have thought, my lord," replied Padway. "And I respectfully suggest that you and your masters do the same. Especially about a little military device that we are introducing. Would you like to see it demonstrated? The parade ground is only a step from here."

PADWAY HAD MADE the proper preparations in advance. When they arrived at the parade ground, Hlodovik weaving slightly all the way, they found Urias, Fritharik, the crossbow, and a supply of bolts. Padway's idea was to have Fritharik take a few demonstration shots at a target. But Fritharik and Urias had other ideas. The latter walked off fifty feet, turned, and placed an apple on his head. Fritharik cocked the crossbow, put a bolt in the

groove, and raised the bow to his shoulder.

Padway was frozen speechless with horror. He didn't dare shout at the two idiots to desist for fear of losing face before the Frank. And if Urias was killed, he hated to think of the damage that would be done to his plans.

The crossbow snapped. There was a short *splush*, and fragments of apple flew about. Urias, grinning, picked pieces of apple out of his hair and walked back.

"Do you find the demonstration impressive, my lord?" Padway asked.

"Yes, quite," said Hlodovik. "Let's see that device. Hm-m-m. Of course, the brave Franks don't believe that any battle was ever won by a lot of silly arrows. But for hunting, now, this mightn't be bad. How does it work? I see; you pull the string back to here—"

While Fritharik was demonstrating the crossbow, Padway took Urias aside and told him, in a low tone, just what he thought of such a fool stunt. Urias tried to look serious, but couldn't help a faint, small-boy grin. Then there was another snap, and something whizzed between them, not a foot from Padway's face. They jumped and spun around. Hlodovik was holding the crossbow, a foolish look on his long face. "I didn't know it went off so easily," he said.

Fritharik lost his temper. "What are you trying to do, you drunken fool? Kill somebody?"

"What's that? *You* call me a fool? Why—" and the Frank's sword came halfway out of the scabbard.

Fritharik jumped back and grabbed his own sword hilt. Padway and Urias pounced on the two and grabbed their elbows.

"Calm yourself, my lord!" cried Padway. "It's nothing to start a fight over. I'll apologize personally."

The Frank merely got madder and tried to shake off Padway. "I'll teach that low-born swine! My honor is insulted!" he shouted. Several Gothic soldiers loafing around the field looked up and trotted over. Hlodovik saw them coming and put his sword back, growling: "This is fine treatment for the representative of King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar. Just wait till they hear of this."

Padway tried to mollify him, but Hlodovik merely grumped, and soon left Ravenna. Padway dispatched a warning to Sisigis to be on the lookout for a Frankish attack. His conscience bothered him a good deal. In a way he thought he ought to have tried to appease the Franks, as he hated the idea of being responsible for war. But he knew that that fierce and treacherous tribe would only take each concession as a sign of weakness. The time to stop the Franks was the first time.

Then another envoy arrived, this time from the Kutrigurs or Bulgarian Huns. The usher told Padway: "He's very dignified; doesn't speak any Latin or Gothic, so he uses an interpreter. Says he's a boyar, whatever that is."

"Show him in."

The Bulgarian envoy was a stocky, bowlegged man with high cheekbones, a fiercely upswept mustache, and a nose even bigger than Padway's. He wore a handsome fur-lined coat, baggy trousers, and a silk turban wound about his shaven skull, from the rear of which two black pigtails jutted absurdly. Despite the finery, Padway found reason to suspect that the man had never had a bath in his life. The in-

terpreter was a small, nervous Thracian who hovered a pace to the Bulgar's left and rear.

The Bulgar clumped in, bowed stiffly, and did not offer to shake hands. Probably not done among the Huns, thought Padway. He bowed back and indicated a chair. He regretted having done so a moment later, when the Bulgar hiked his boots up on the upholstery and sat cross-legged. Then he began to speak, in a strangely musical tongue which Padway guessed belonged to the Finno-Ugrian group, related to Turkish. He stopped every three or four words for the interpreter to translate. It ran something like this:

Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)

Interpreter: I am the Boyar Karojan—

Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)

Interpreter: The son of Chakir—

Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)

Interpreter: Who was the son of Tardu—

Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)

Interpreter: Envoy of Kardam—

Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)

Interpreter: The son of Kapagan—

Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)

Interpreter: And Great Khan of the Kutrigurs.

It was distracting to listen to, but not without a certain poetic grandeur. The Bulgar paused impassively at that point. Padway identified himself, and the duo began again:

"My master, the Great Khan—"

"Has received an offer from Justinian, Emperor of the Romans—"

"Of fifty thousand solidi—"

"To refrain from invading his dominions."

"If Thiudahad, King of the Goths—"

"Will make us a better offer—"

"We will ravage Thrace—"

"And leave the Gothic realm alone."

"If he does not—"

"We will take Justinian's gold—"

"And invade the Gothic territories—"

"Of Pannonia and Noricum."

Padway cleared his throat and began his reply, pausing for translation. This method had its advantages, he found. It gave you time to think.

"My master, Thiudahad, King of the Goths and Italians—"

"Authorizes me to say—"

"That he has better use for his money—"

"Than to bribe people not to attack him—"

"And that if the Kutrigurs think—"

"That they can invade our territory—"

"They are welcome to try—"

"But that we cannot guarantee them—"

"A very hospitable reception."

The envoy replied:

"Think, man, on what you say."

"For the armies of the Kutrigurs—"

"Cover the Sarmatian steppe like locusts."

"The hoofbeats of their horses—"

"Are a mighty thunder."

"The flight of their arrows—"

"Darkens the sun."

"Where they have passed—"

"Not even grass will grow."

Padway replied:

"Most excellent Karojan—"

"What you say may be true."

"But in spite of their thundering and sun-darkening—"

"The last time the Kutrigurs—"

"Assailed our land, a few years ago—"

"They got the pants beat off them."

Continued on page 132

FIVE FATHOMS OF PEARLS

It was a queer sort of French-window—one of the kind that wasn't there, yet opened on a garden that wasn't there—

by JAMES H. BEARD

Illustrated by Orban

In a great bleak room, whose bare walls and massive hand-hewn timbers were darkened by the smoke of many years, sat Peter Hume absorbed in reading pages taken from the piles of papers neatly arranged on the great oak table before him. Peter was past fifty, lean and hard, a huge, powerfully built man with a strong, cruel face.

Concentration was a characteristic of this man, and he was deeply interested in what he read, yet it seemed impossible for him to keep his attention focused on the business at hand. In spite of himself his eyes would stray to the bare wall on his left, and he would gaze at its blank surface as if fascinated by something that he saw there. Suddenly, he sprang from his chair, squared his shoulders and stood directly in front of the spot on the wall which had continually troubled him—his face set like granite. Nothing happened, and Peter, with a snarled oath—not stopping to snuff the candles—stamped out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

The kitchen which Peter Hume now entered was much like the room he had left. Before the open fire was a clutter of cooking utensils, which Joe, his black slave, used in preparing his master's meals. The old Negro was sitting before the fire, smoking a corncob pipe.

"Saddle a horse," Peter commanded gruffly, "and bring it to the door at once."

It was late, and there was a driving rain outside. The roads were little more than long canals of mud. Joe wondered at the order but made no comment, and left the room to do his master's bidding.

No light showed in any house as Peter Hume rode through the main street, for people of the village rose early and went to rest shortly after sundown. But there was a light in the taproom of the inn and a fire burning brightly on the huge hearth in front of which Peter seated himself before giving the innkeeper his order for brandy. There were some half dozen men in the room, but though all knew Peter, none save one spoke to him. The rest did no more than cast sour looks in his direction.

The exception was a man of about Peter's age. He was fat and short, always talking and laughing and perspiring, so that his face seemed wet and greasy, even on a cold winter night. The people in the town feared and hated him even more than they did Peter Hume, but because he was always talking and laughing and seemed to be overflowing with good humor, strangers at the inn would often collect about him. This man was known as Allen Dorn. He was singing a ribald song, but when he saw Peter he stopped instantly, allowing his

"That captain—" he gasped. "He went down with the ship we sunk—"

mouth to hang open from sheer astonishment.

"Peter Hume," he said after a moment. "How could you ride alone in the dark and the devil not snatch you up?"

"I am presently," said Peter, "going to tempt the devil even more, for I am going to ride with you."

"With me?" repeated Allen Dorn in astonishment, and then added: "Not tonight, by all the saints! I have small fear of the devil, but rain and mud have ever been my enemies."

"Yet you must ride with me and at once," said Peter.

The fat man sobered and coming to Peter's side, said to him in a low voice, "Has anything gone wrong? All seemed well set at noon, this day." Then he straightened and took a turn about the room. He tried to look out of the window, but it was just blackness, with the rain beating against the glass. Finally he returned to Peter's side.

"If it was another man," he said, "I would tell him to go hang himself on the gallows tree, but if there is reason to bring you out this night, there is reason to make me ride with you. Let us be on our way!"

When they were both on the road, Allen Dorn asked: "Where do we ride?"

"To my house," Peter answered.

"To the house of a witch," said Allen, "bought cheap because no one else would live in it."

Peter made no reply and, though his companion talked constantly throughout the ride, Peter spoke not a word.

JOE HAD SNUFFED the candles after his master rode away, but they were soon relighted. Peter sat at the table in the same position he had been in when reading, and Allen Dorn sat opposite to him. Joe placed two glasses and a bottle of brandy on the table and left the men together.

"Now," said Allen Dorn, "what is the reason that you rode to town and brought me here?"

"The witch, Elsie Dorn, was a strange woman," said Peter.

"The devil fly away with her," said Allen. "She was my grandmother, and I know she was strange, but man, tell me what is wrong that you came for me?"

"Elsie Dorn was my grandmother, also," said Peter. "It may be that the devil did fly away with her. Sure she was gone one morning, none knew where, but I have here something that she wrote, and it reads more like the writing of a parson than a witch."

Allen leaned back in his chair and for some time studied Peter's face, and then he said, "If you have gone soft, give me your share of the gold, and I will take all the blame, and when your time has come, you can tell that to the devil, and I will not gainsay it."

"Not one farthing," said Peter, "not if hell fire were reaching into this very room."

Allen nodded his head. "So I thought," he said. "So I thought. That is Peter Hume, my dear cousin, to the life, but then what is this all about and what do you want of me?"

Peter tapped the papers before him. "Do you mind," he said, "when we were aboard the *Sally* and we caught that brig off Langdon Point? She had a fat skipper who kept afloat for an hour after we dumped him overboard. I said at the time that he looked like you."

"I mind," said Allen, "but what reason had you for—"

"There is a reason," interrupted

Peter Hume, and he spoke with such quiet intensity that Allen grew quiet wondering at the man before him, if he were mad, and if he were like to try to kill his guest.

"Do you mind," Peter continued, "the night after the fight? You dreamed that you went down forty fathoms and met that skipper and drank brandy with him out of an old cask—you and two sea women. You said it was as real as though it had happened, yet all the time you were asleep on the *Sally*, snoring like a sick sow."

"I mind that dream," said Allen. He had a small pistol tucked inside his coat, and he loosened a button so that he could reach it more easily.

Peter leaned forward. "That is what Elsie Dorn says here, that we are in two places all the time, doing different things, and living different lives. I would not give what she has written a thought," said Peter after a moment, "except that there is a reason."

"You talk like a fool," said Allen.

"It is a pleasure to hear you say so," Peter answered, and as he spoke he glanced at the wall on his left, and when he had done so, he continued to stare and he trembled slightly.

"You are talking of nothing, Peter, to gain time. But why? What are you waiting for? Plying me with brandy and making talk. I saw you do it with Dick Marlow, talk and talk to him, and keep his glass filled, waiting for Ned Hale to creep up and shoot him in the back. I will listen no more to your nonsense. I was a fool to come with you." Saying this, Allen rose, and placing his hands in his pockets, walked toward that part of the wall which had engaged Peter's attention earlier in the evening and stared at it.

"Well," he said, "it is not as bad as I thought. The rain has stopped and the moon is up."

PETER RELAXED in his chair, as though a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

"I was afraid you might not notice," he said, "so afraid you would not see."

"You have gone stark mad and forgotten how to talk sense," said Allen. "Why should I not notice?"

"If I am mad, you are mad also," said Peter, "and that is a great comfort," he added, in so low a voice that Allen could not hear him.

"Do you know," said Allen as he stared at the bare wall on Peter's left, "things look different from a different angle. I would never know what I see as the outside of your house."

"No," said Peter, "I would not expect you to."

"I never got this old house straight in my mind," said Allen. "I could have sworn that your kitchen was on the other side of this wall."

"And so it is," said Peter rising from his chair.

Allen turned quickly and his hand went to the concealed pistol.

Peter laughed and sat down.

"Open the door," he said. "Step into the kitchen and look on the other side of that wall. The rain has stopped, has it? Why you can hear it beat against all the other windows except that one. And the moon is up, you say? Think, man! An old sailor like you and not know when there should be a moon."

Without replying, Allen walked hastily through the door to the kitchen, and in a moment was back. He looked again through a strange window into a strange garden

flooded with moonlight, and like a man distraught staggered to a window directly behind Peter against which the rain drove in torrents.

"God's blood," he said, and again, "God's blood!" Then he turned to Peter. "This is the reason," he said, "this is why you brought me here, to know if you were mad. To see if I would note this window."

"Aye," said Peter, "that is the reason."

"May your soul rot in hell for it!" gasped Allen.

"I make no doubt it will," Peter answered, "and yours beside it. It is always moonlight outside there, Allen, never dark, never sunshine, but always that same moon in the same place. I have looked out there many times, since I have been in this house, Allen, and never saw it different."

"I am fair stunned," said Allen, "fair beaten down," and he came unsteadily toward the table to reach for the brandy.

"Is the cursed thing always there?" he asked in a hushed voice. "Must you forever be staring through it, as you sit here and work by day, and as you smoke your pipe at night?"

"No," Peter answered. "It is not always there, not oftener than perhaps once in a fortnight. I could not have stood it else."

"But why do you stand it? There's room at the inn, and good company, and better brandy than you gave me tonight."

"Did you note," Peter asked, "that a path leads straight from the window, and maybe fifty feet along that path is an old sundial?"

"I saw the path," Allen answered, "and something standing, perhaps more sixty feet than fifty feet away, but if you know it to be a sundial, you have better eyes than a cat."

"It is written down here," said Peter, pointing to the papers on the table, "written down by Elsie Dorn, a sundial and at the base of the sundial, a chest, and in the chest—"

"Gold," cried Allen.

"No," said Peter. "Not gold, not diamonds, nor emeralds, but pearls —a string of pearls, five fathoms long."

Allen turned ghastly white with the lust of treasure. "And you never went after them. You had not the courage."

"No," said Peter. "I had not the courage to go—alone."

Allen again looked through that strange window; once more he entered the kitchen and inspected the wall from the other side; he looked through the other windows, and even opened one and let the rain beat against his face. Finally he spoke:

"I do not blame you," he said. "I would not myself, go out there—alone."

He turned to Peter. "The writing she left us," he said, "the writing about Harriet Dorn. Have you still that paper?"

Harriet Dorn, the only living relative of the two, was a young girl.

"Have you still that paper?" he repeated.

"I have it," answered Peter.

"Let me hear it read again," Allen said. "I gave little attention to it at the time—but now we are in Elsie Dorn's house—and that cursed window is there where there can be no window, but never mind, read me again the writing."

Peter filled both glasses with brandy, and, selecting a paper from a pile on the table before him, read:

"Your eyes are blue, Allen. Your father's eyes were blue, and he was a

good father to you. Your eyes are blue, Peter. Your mother's eyes were blue, and she was a good mother to you. You, Allen, and you, Peter, hard, cruel men you be, but because the blood in your veins and the blood in the veins of Harriet Dorn is the same blood, I bid you care for her. I bid you care for her first because of blood, and second because of the things I can do and will do if I hear Harriet Dorn crying in the night. Though I be dead and buried, though I be burned to ashes, I can reach you and will reach you if you fail Harriet Dorn. Your eyes are blue, Allen, and your eyes are blue, Peter, her eyes are blue, and my eyes are blue, before they turned red from gazing too long into the fires of hell."

"That is all," said Peter, and laid the paper down.

"A mad writing," Allen said, "a mad writing such as only a witch would write. What have blue eyes to do with it? We divided the gold between us, and there is an end of it."

"If the dead could reach us," said Peter, "we would have been undone long since. And a dead witch is dead."

"The paper about the five fathoms of pearls, was that in the box that was to be burned unopened?" asked Allen.

"It was," Peter answered.

"And also in that box was the paper that told you where to find this brandy, flavored with some cursed foreign, heathen spice?"

"It was," said Peter, for the second time, then turning abruptly to his guest, he continued: "Do you know where Harriet Dorn is now? She is nearer kin to you than to me."

"She is nearer kin to me," Allen admitted, "but that writing is for both of us, and if Elsie Dorn can reach us, she will spare you no more than she will spare me. The brat is with fat Peg Winslow, and I make no doubt she has cried more than once in the night."

For some time the men continued to drink brandy, glancing from time to time at each other and at the window.

"I tell you what it is," said Peter at last. "I mean to have a try for those pearls, and I know you will never let me go alone."

"If we get the pearls, Harriet Dorn can have the gold," Peter continued, "I will write a paper leaving it to her."

And so he did, and Allen wrote one also, both men signing in due form.

The air was cool and bracing in the garden, and all seemed natural enough with dry leaves rustling against their feet as they followed the path. Yet with each step they glanced constantly to the right and left and—fearless men as they were—Peter would have been glad had Allen suggested that they turn back, and Allen would have needed only a word from Peter to send him scurrying to the window—for it was in the mind of both that the window might at any moment disappear, and there would be no road out of that garden, away from that untimely, unchanging moon. At the end of the path was the sundial and beside this an ancient chest bound in metal.

"We will carry it back through the window," said Allen, "and open it in the house. I am fair mad to get out of this cursed place."

Peter assented with a nod, and stooped to take hold of one end, but suddenly checked in the act.

Just beyond the sundial was a low hedge and beyond this a road cut at right angles to the path on which they stood. It gleamed white in the moonlight. Both men heard the sound of someone approaching, and

both instinctively crouched behind the hedge, and, as they watched from their hiding place, two girls passed arm in arm, laughing and talking. The lithe movements of their bodies and the tones of their voices bespoke health and happiness; their hair gleamed like gold where the light touched it. Beautiful girls they were, and it was a beautiful sight to see them pass, full of enjoyment and talking with each other, but as Allen and Peter watched, the blood seemed to freeze in their veins.

After a long time Allen spoke: "Do you mind those two, Peter?"

"I mind them," Peter answered scarce above a whisper. "They were on the last ship we took. I saw them—we both saw them—dead."

They were frightened, shaken men, but the treasure lust was stronger than their fear, and an iron will could still control their actions, so it was that they again stooped to pick up the chest. But, as they moved, again they heard someone coming and again they crouched. This time it was a single man who passed, a short, heavy man dressed in a bizarre fashion, with a great cutlass hanging at his side.

In the act of passing the place where Peter and Allen were hidden, the man suddenly stopped and turning, stared directly at them. They could see his face clearly, he seemed to be trying to speak, the muscles of his face writhed, and his expression was one of such venom and unholy evil joy that Peter and Allen were like birds before a snake, or rabbits before a weasel. They could not speak, they could not move.

The man took a slow step toward them, and a second step. Allen tried to reach for his hidden pistol, but his hand refused the dictates of his will. Then a ripple of youthful laughter sounded, the girls were coming back. A change came over the face of the man in the road; he turned his head in the direction from which the laughter came, then he looked again at Allen and Peter. He seemed torn between fear and desire. As the girls drew nearer and nearer, he crouched lower and lower and crowded closer and closer to the side of the road. As they passed, apparently unaware of his presence, he groveled in the dust; then, suddenly springing to his feet, fled madly away.

"That was Captain Blythe," said Allen when he could speak.

"Aye, it was," answered Peter, "though I saw no sign of the mark your lead made."

"And no sign of the mark your steel made," Allen replied.

"We had best be out of this place, Allen," said Peter.

"Did you note that Captain Blythe, who feared nothing, neither God, man, nor devil, when he was alive, yet now that he is dead—and we know him to be dead, Allen, you and I—is scared out of his senses by girls?"

"Aye, but they were dead girls," Allen replied solemnly.

"We will make an end of this quickly," said Peter, and drawing a great knife from inside his coat, and slipping it under the lid of the chest, pried it open. "We had best know if the chest is worth carrying away," he said.

Both looked inside, and, as they looked, they forgot the girls and the captain. Showing white in the moonlight were pearls.

"Five fathoms," said Allen, "all strung together."

Peter raised a length from the

chest and then lowering it, closed the lid.

"Take the other end," he said briefly.

Allen raised his head, "Someone is coming," he said.

"Nevertheless, we will go," said Peter, "but walk slowly. If we hurry, we will run, and if we run, we shall go mad. I am a frightened man, Allen."

"No more than I am, Peter."

Between them they started to carry the heavy chest toward the window, controlling with great effort their desire to run, walking stiff-legged like automatons. And both men looked back, they could not help it.

It was not the captain that was coming, as both secretly feared. There were two things in the road, two things that were looking over the hedge. And Peter and Allen began to hurry, and then something touched Peter on the calf of the leg, and something brushed against Allen's cheek, and at that moment the window for an instant went dark, and the light behind it seemed to flicker as though promising to go dark again in a moment and stay dark. It was more than could be endured even by these two.

Allen dropped his end of the chest with the idea of running, but a blow from the great arm of Peter dashed him to the ground. As the chest fell the lid flew open, and Peter got a glimpse of the pearls. Even at such a moment he could not quite resist them. He snatched hastily, and with a length in his hand and the rest of the great string trailing behind him, he dashed for the window.

Allen had fallen hard, but he was not stunned. Once inside the room, Allen thought, Peter will put out the light, and the window will be gone. He will have the pearls, and I will be out here. While these thoughts raced through his mind he was drawing his pistol, and just as Peter clambered through the opening he fired. Then he scrambled to his feet, and in a shambling run gained the window.

He saw Peter lying inside, and the pearls on the ground outside where Peter had dropped them when the bullet struck him. For a moment he hesitated, then he decided to get into the room and reach out for the pearls. He was in the act of doing this when Peter in his last conscious effort buried his great knife in Allen's back.

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VANDERDECKEN

Only the captain recognized the old Dutchman for what he was—and the sure destruction he brought!

by FREDERICK ENGELHARDT

Illustrated by Kramer

"JUST one *sailor,* just *one,* is all I'm asking," howled Big Bill Gantry. "Surely, Winnow, you can find me *one* sailor in Frisco."

"Well—" The fox-faced ship chandler scratched his head dubiously.

"Do you expect me to work a big four-poster like this"—the mate's arm swung in an arc over the littered deck of the *Jasmine* bark—"with the sort of stumblebums you give me? Hell, half of them have never been on water, or in it, from the looks of them."

Several of the two dozen ragged, sodden derelicts Winnow had fetched across the bay lifted bleary eyes at this, but there was no animosity in them. The raw, red whiskey the canny Winnow had furnished so liberally had washed away even their antipathy to honest work.

"I want a sailmaker, a good one, and I don't give a damn if he's Davy Jones' brother," Gantry gritted. "The lousy, rotten clothes the owners hung on this rag wagon won't hold in a breeze, let alone a Cape Horn gale."

Vanderdecken, an ear cocked to catch the wrangling on deck, relaxed and stretched his long legs in the stern sheets of the chandler's foul launch. He knew now he would sail with the *Jasmine.* His experienced eye ran along the bark's lines and widened with critical appreciation—then dimmed sadly.

The *Jasmine* was the last of her line; after her there would be no more wind ships to work in and out of Golden Gate. Vanderdecken was a sailor, and the thought that he must sacrifice this lovely bark weighed on him. But he had no choice. His seven years were almost up, and he had already wasted two months looking for a ship bound around the Horn.

"I've got a man, Mr. Gantry," Winnow was saying. "But—"

"Fetch him aboard," the mate snapped. "We're sailing on the tide, if we have to row this hulk through the Gate."

Vanderdecken, looking up, saw Winnow's sharp features dart over the rail. The chandler gestured with his arm. Vanderdecken, with a satisfied smile, rose, slung his small sea chest over his shoulder and climbed slowly, but easily, up the swaying Jacob's ladder to the *Jasmine's* waist.

There he paused and looked around him, tapping the pine deck meanwhile with his toe. The pitch oozing from the seams, the creaking of the rigging and the rattling of the swaying blocks, assailing his senses all at once, affected him with nostalgia. He closed his eyes and for a moment imagined himself already back on the familiar poop of his own beloved *Zeendam* galiot, beating ever eastward around the Horn.

"He'll do," Gantry decided. "He's a sailor. Why the devil were you

The howl of the storm-wind seemed to please and strengthen the giant Dutchman—

holding out on me, Winnow?"

"His name is Vanderdecken," the chandler said. "He's dumb. He can't talk. And he *wanted* to make this trip around the Horn."

Gantry's pale eyes flickered with suspicion. "Police want him?"

"I don't know," Winnow said, "but he gives me the creeps. The way he looks at you."

Instantly Vanderdecken was on his guard. Immortal, he was, yet this animal Winnow might doom him to a century's penance before he could again hope to set foot on his own deck. By a mighty effort of will, he stilled his seething, tortured soul and sheathed his pale-blue eyes with guile, and met the giant mate's searching gaze with equanimity. Gantry turned back to Winnow with a snort.

"You're an old woman, Winnow. This man is the best of the lot. I know a sailor when I see one. Captain Toll will give you your blood money, but don't let the commissioner see you taking it."

Winnow hastened aft and climbed to the quarter-deck, where the white-bearded captain took his arm and drew him into the shadow of the longboat.

Gantry kicked his new crew onto their feet and herded them to the mainmast, where the bored shipping commissioner was seated at a table, waiting to sign them on.

Man after man shuffled forward and scrawled his name or made his mark. Gantry peered over the commissioner's shoulder when the last arrival came up.

"Vanderdecken, Sailmaker," he

rasped before the sailor should disclose his affliction. Commissioners were funny, sometimes.

"You a citizen, Vanderdecken?" the commissioner asked.

"Hollander," Gantry put in.

Vanderdecken caught the mate's wink and signed without a word. The commissioner folded the big sheets, handed one copy to the mate and rolled up the other.

"Well, that's all. Everything in order, mister," he said. "Pleasant voyage."

"Winnow will take you ashore, sir," Gantry said.

AN HOUR LATER the tide turned and a puffing tug appeared under the *Jasmine's* bow. Gantry nodded to Vanderdecken and the latter followed him onto the fo'c's'le head, where the bos'n and carpenter were waiting to take the tug's line. With the exception of the captain and second mate aft, they were the only sober men on board.

Gantry's eyes gleamed approval as Vanderdecken caught the tug's light heaving line and single-handed snaked the heavy towing hawser aboard. Wilkes, the bos'n, helped make fast.

"All right," Gantry barked. "Vanderdecken, hop below to the donkey engine and start the capstan."

Vanderdecken's pale eyes opened wider and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Huh!" Gantry grunted. "Oh, you don't know how. Chips, you take the engine."

Below them the heavy-duty Diesel wheezed, then started coughing, shaking the deck. Slowly the chain tightened. The hook broke out of the mud and the *Jasmine* lurched forward under tow. Aft, the second mate spun the wheel to bring the big bark into line.

"Evenin' fog's rollin' in," Wilkes commented, glancing ahead.

"We'll be through Golden Gate before it's too thick," Gantry said.

The puffing tug plunged into the fleecy bank and became indistinct. A moment later the fog surrounded the bark, and the tug's whistle began to moan mournfully. The roar of churning water sounded to port as a big Sausalito ferry changed course to pass under their stern. Voices carried clearly through the fog.

"That's a real old-timer," the group on the fo'c's'le heard. "Looks like a ghost out of the past."

"Ghost is right," the bos'n muttered. "We're all ghosts."

Every muscle in Vanderdecken's body drew taut. A remark like that, followed by the discovery of the *beans*, had led to his being thrown overboard from the *Merry Maid* brig in these same waters a hundred years ago. And Wilkes, with his scanty gray hair and seamed face, *must* know his story. Again the Hollander realized he was paying dearly for those seven years of partial surcease vouchsafed him out of each century.

"You're a cheerful cuss," the mate said. "Are you trying to scare our friend Vanderdecken here?"

Vanderdecken turned and regarded the group anxiously in the fading light. These men could still wreck his plans. He had power, but the cost of using it now was too great to risk. He, Vanderdecken, was still helpless.

"I don't know about him," the bos'n said, "but you, Mr. Gantry, and me, and Chips there, and the captain and the second, we belong to 1870, not 1939. And as for the crew"—he jerked a thumb toward the miserable group huddled in the waist—"they're dead, only they ain't laid down yet. And this ship is

listed in Lloyd's Register as lost."

"I know about that. She was reported lost last year. They haven't corrected it yet."

"Well," the bos'n went on, "I'm sixty-five years old. So far as I'm concerned, I don't give a damn. This is my last trip. I'll never sail in steam."

Vanderdecken smiled for the first time.

"Atta boy," the mate said. He slapped the Hollander on the back. "Don't let this old shellback get you down."

The *Jasmine's* sharp bow lifted high, then plunged deep into the water.

"We're in the Gate," Gantry said. "Another hour or so and we let go the tug. Wilkes, see if you can kick some life into your ghosts and get a heads'l on this ship."

VANDERDECKEN reached high, worked loose a fold of the furled forestays'l and fingered the canvas.

"Rotten stuff, ain't it?" the mate commented. "That'll be your job till we raise the Azores, five months from now—making new clothes for her."

"You poor fool!" the other thought as the mate rolled aft to the break to watch Wilkes. "You poor fool! You don't know that I am *Vanderdecken*. You don't know yet, I hope, that you must die so I may go on—no, I can't say living."

He caught hold of the foretopmast stay and thrilled a moment to its strumming. He was going back. After seven accursed years—silent years—among strange mortal men, he was going back. Then his sea-faded eyes saddened. Already he could see those graceful, raking masts snapping, those smooth, sleek lines of hull and deck contorting in the grip of a merciless reef. Too often before had it happened.

The bark was talking now as she trod the broken water of the narrow strait. The breeze, faint inside the hill-guarded bay, freshened. At the mate's nod, Vanderdecken ripped the stops from the furled sail and freed the halliard and sheet.

"*Nein*," the carpenter interposed as the Hollander prepared to heave on the heavy halliard. "We use capstan, so." He caught the hauling part of the line in a snatch block at the foot of the foremast and led it forward to the slowly turning capstan. "Brains it giffs, nod beef."

Vanderdecken watched him with interest. As the carpenter threw turn after turn around the capstan the line took hold and the big sail went up. Vanderdecken moved back to the mast and stood by to stop off the halliard as soon as the canvas was set.

"He must have learned his trade in a Texel lugger," Gantry commented. "I never saw a sailor before who'd use his back in preference to machinery."

"Goot sailorman, though," the carpenter grunted.

Mile Rock Light blinked through the mist off their port bow, slid past and disappeared astern.

"Stand by to leggo the tow line!" Captain Toll's storm-tempered bellow boomed along the deck.

"Aye, aye, sir."

The tug's puffing ceased as she lost way. The heavy towing hawser slackened and the three men struggled to work the eye off the bitts. The hawser jumped out of their hands and flashed through the chock to fall with a splash into the sea. They heard curses from the towboat men as the latter strained to haul it inboard. The stays'l filled in the breeze and the *Jasmine's* head swung south. A creaking and groaning aft

indicated that the second and Wilkes were setting the huge spanker.

"Now the standing jib," Gantry barked. "Then we'll break out the lower tops'ls."

Enough of the bedraggled crew were sober by this time to go aloft, but the moon was high in the heavens before the courses were drawing and the bark was plowing through the dark seas at a reasonable five knots.

"Now ve knock off und eat, yah," the carpenter grunted.

He led Vanderdecken to the low house amidships where the petty officers bunked and they washed in a bucket of sea water. The Hollander then turned to the small water breaker braced against the bulkhead and emptied cup after cup.

"Gawd man," observed Wilkes, who came in just then, "if you keep that up, you'll empty the casks before we're out a week."

The carpenter broke out his tin plate and eating tools and sat on the edge of his bunk expectantly. A few minutes later the messboy, a sharp-faced youngster from the Frisco slums, popped in at the door, deposited several covered pans on the deck, and ducked out as precipitately.

"Beans!" howled Wilkes, uncovering the nearest pan. "Lord love us, already we get beans. What you got there, Chips?"

The carpenter lifted another lid and stirred the contents with his spoon. "Bean zoop," he said.

Vanderdecken summoned up all his tremendous will, all his painfully learned tricks of dissimulation, as the other two turned to him. *He* knew there would be beans for supper—and for breakfast in the morning, and for dinner and for supper again. Beans, nothing but beans, because his mere *presence* on a ship turned all food to beans, to brand him in the eyes of sailormen the world over. And if there was wine, it would be sour.

He thought he detected a glitter of suspicion in Wilkes' rheumy eyes and shifted slightly to be able to pounce on the man.

"I'll kill him now," he told himself savagely. "I'll kill him first. And that poor, stupid clown of a carpenter, too. They *can't* put me off now. I won't face oblivion for a century. This ship is going to carry me back if I have to sail her myself. *And I can do it.*"

Wilkes looked at him sourly; the carpenter, wide-eyed.

"Curse the fiendish fates who overheard my foolish boast," Vanderdecken snarled in his mind. "If only I could talk. But I dare not. Not till we speak my own *Zeendam*."

Wilkes opened his mouth, but before he could speak, there came a concerted howl from the fo'c's'le. At the same moment, the bull voice of Mate Gantry was heard aft, bellowing for the cook.

"I guess everybody got beans," the bos'n said mournfully, at last. "We might as well make the best of it."

Vanderdecken almost sighed with relief. Never before had he realized how much he craved the companionship of his own stout Dutch crew.

As day men, he and the other two were permitted to sleep quietly through the warm night while the big bark rode the long Pacific swells. The lookout turned them out at daybreak. A few minutes later the messboy appeared, shoved his pots across the sill, and disappeared.

"If it's beans again—" Wilkes lifted a lid. "By God, it is! This is too much."

He plunged through the door and strode aft, the steaming pot swinging from his hand.

"Mr. Gantry—" he began.

"I know, I know," the mate said, holding up a hand. "We've got them, too. Cooks says he must have stowed the beans on top of the rest of his stores. He's going through them this morning."

All that morning the cook, assisted by the second cook and messboy, dug into the tightly packed lazarette. Twoscore eyes watched them as barrel after barrel appeared on deck. As the morning wore on, the cook's expression became more and more frenzied, and the eyes that watched him grew colder and colder.

At six bells the cook, his fat belly quivering, shuffled aft and looked up into the frowning, white-bearded face of the captain.

"Please, sir," he faltered. "There doesn't seem to be anything but beans."

"You were responsible for the stores." Captain Toll's voice was restrained, but accusing.

"Yes, but—"

"Never mind that. We'll have to heave to off San Pedro and have fresh stores sent out to us. *And* a new cook. You're going to jail for larceny, if the crew doesn't hang you first."

The cook waved a pudgy hand in protest.

"That's all," the captain said, turning his back and resuming his walk up and down the weather deck.

A marlinespike whistled down from aloft and thudded into the pine deck at the cook's feet. The latter squealed in alarm and dove into his galley.

"Dot's funny," the carpenter remarked to Vanderdecken, who was sitting on the main hatch weaving a marriage splice into a stays'l leachline. "A grooked gook or steward I can onderstand, but vy, if he sells der stores, does he reblace dem vit only beans."

The Hollander resorted again to a shrug.

The glum second mate, an expatriate down-Easter named Buck, saved the day by trolling for fish. The faint breeze had died away and the ship was barely moving through the water. In less than half an hour he had hauled in a dozen flounders and twice as many mackerel. Others followed his example, and by nightfall there was enough fish to see them halfway to the Horn.

Not until they hove to in Catalina Channel did the cook appear on deck, and then only to be hurried over the side into a police boat, still protesting his innocence. But his protests weighed little with men who had been forced to live on fish and beans for more than a week. It took the better part of the day to transship the fresh stores, and again it was night before the *Jasmine* squared away for the long run south.

WEEK AFTER WEEK passed as the bark drove southwest before the steady trade wind, always blinded by fog.

"Damned if I ever saw such weather," Captain Toll remarked to Gantry, fingering his useless sextant. "Who ever heard of such a fog way out here in the Pacific? I haven't been able to take a noon observation for two weeks."

Nor was the captain the only one aboard damning the fog. It had Vanderdecken even more worried. The curse of the beans he had overcome, but fog and storm followed him always, nor was there anything he could do about it.

"Two hundred years ago," the Hollander was thinking, "I was ma-

rooned on the Main for this. A hundred years ago I was cast adrift in a small boat. These sailors of today seem to have lost their 'superstitions,' but soon someone will remember. They can't help but remember. The curse made me my own Judas—the beans, the fog, and this terrible, racking thirst.

"But"—he raised his fist and shook it at the heavens while his hard face contorted—"this ship *will* raise Cape Horn, and I will still be aboard. I, Vanderdecken, swear it."

He turned to the galley breaker and drew another pannikin of water.

"I'm beginning to think we've got a hoodoo aboard," Gantry growled back on the poop deck.

"Something's wrong. You mind those beans?" Captain Toll remarked.

Gantry shuddered.

"Well, I have three cases of very fine California port wine in my cabin," continued the captain. "A present from one of the shippers. Half our cargo is wine, you know."

"Yes, sir." Gantry looked hopeful.

"Every blessed bottle has turned sour. Every one. I'm afraid to test the stuff in the hold."

"That's the second's job, sir. I'll put him onto it right off."

"Yes, you'd better, Mr. Gantry. We might as well know the worst. Though I don't see how it could happen."

Going forward, Gantry came across the new cook, a huge black strayed from his native Alabama.

"What are you doing out here?" the mate snapped. "Dinner's late now."

"Please, Mistah Mate, Ah ain't a-goin' inta thet galley while thet man's in theah. Thet dummy Dutchman."

"What?"

"He comes in at one bell, at two bells, at three bells. Every half hour. An' drinks a gallon of water. Ah'm scared of him. He gives me goose pimples."

"You're daft," Gantry growled. "Get back to work. You think it's the poor guy's fault he can't talk? Come on now. Shove off."

He gave the cook a push and the black sidled unhappily along the deck to the galley. Vanderdecken stepped through the door and stood watching the pair with his usual blank expression. The cook's eyes rolled as he slipped past the Hollander and ducked into the house.

"Cripes!" Gantry muttered to himself, as the Hollander's cold eyes fixed on him. The back of the mate's neck prickled. He shook off the feeling in a minute, but the other's pale eyes haunted him the rest of the day.

THAT NIGHT he had other things to think of. The fog lifted suddenly, but he had scarcely time to take one observation before the sky clouded over.

"All hands!" he bellowed. "Turn out the watch below!"

The *Jasmine*, still under way, pitched easily and monotonously, but her sails flapped futilely in the sudden calm. The slap of bare feet against the planked deck echoed through the darkness as the port watch tumbled out.

"Aloft!" Gantry shouted. "Get the canvas off her! There's a blow coming up!"

The second led his watch forward to handle the heads'ls. The petty officers, followed by the rest of the crew, swarmed into the rigging. Blocks rattled and squealed in the stillness as sheets were let go and the big courses clewed up. Captain

Toll suddenly appeared beside the mate, buttoning his coat.

"Better bend a storm trys'l on the jigger, mister," he remarked, sniffing the suddenly cool air.

"Aye, aye, sir. Good thing Sails has repaired one. We're short of canvas."

"We're short of everything, mister," the captain said. "I've never taken a ship to sea like this. But what can we do? We're lucky to get a berth, you and I."

Five minutes later the storm struck them. Even under bare poles the big bark heeled over—and stayed over, with half her deck under water.

"Come up! Come up!" Captain Troll yelled at the wheelsman. "Give him a hand, mister!"

Together, the wheelsman and the mate forced up the ship's helm. She came about groggily, just in time to bury her bow in blue water. For one long minute she hung there, her stern high in the air, then her bow erupted from the sea and shook off the clutching crests. Her torn storm jib streamed away in the gale like a pennant.

"Mr. Buck!" The captain's voice rose above the screaming gale. "Get another sail on her for'ard."

Again the bow disappeared in a white foam, with a dozen black figures clinging to the shrouds and stays. When it came up again, only ten figures sprang at the furled fore-stays'l. Frequent flashes of lightning illuminated their task, but even so, half an hour passed before the big triangle of canvas was set and drawing.

Then the ship fell off again and rolled in a trough of the sea. Captain Toll's gleaming eyes sought the wheel. It was spinning wildly, with no hand to hold it. Grimly the old sailor worked his way across the tossing deck, but before he reached the wheel another hand had it—Vanderdecken.

The Hollander stood wide-legged, his bare toes seeming to dig into the pine planking. His shirt had been torn from his back, and the long muscles under his white skin stood out like ropes as, spoke by spoke, he put the helm back over. The rain lashed his face, but could not wipe away the triumphant gleam in his pale eyes, or the victorious grin that curled his lips away from long, white teeth.

Storm and fog might plague Vanderdecken, but they could not vanquish him. No sea could sweep him away or shatter a ship under him. He—and he alone—could save the *Jasmine*. His fingers tightened joyfully on the wet spokes and he whispered endearing words to the struggling bark—words reserved for his own stout galiot.

Even as the suddenly awed captain watched, the *Jasmine* lifted her head, shouldered aside a mountainous sea and bucked manfully into the teeth of the gale. The big heads'l pulled her over the crests and no more were her decks washed by the seas.

"*Vanderdecken!*" It was a cry of understanding—and horror. It was torn from the captain's throat as his legs failed him and he slid to the deck, his back against the companionway hatch. But his eyes, glassy with that nameless horror, never left the lone figure at the wheel.

With the first faint, pink rays of daybreak the storm abated. Men freed themselves from the shrouds, where they had remained lashed all through the night. Buck came aft, spied the recumbent figure of the captain, and hurried to his side. With the second's aid, Captain Toll

got to his feet, but his hand sought the fife rail for support.

"You all right, sir?" Buck asked anxiously.

"Thought we were bound for Davy Jones' locker that time, for sure." Buck became almost garrulous in his relief.

Captain Toll shook his head. "No," he said. "We won't go to the bottom—yet."

They found Gantry, his right leg doubled under him, wedged between the bitts and port gutter. He was conscious and bright-eyed.

"Did you see the way Vanderdecken handled her?" he asked. "Thought we were finished when the wheel kicked Rowe and myself into the scuppers. He went overboard. That Hollander is a sailor."

"Yes," Captain Toll said dully. "He's a *sailor*, all right. Never any doubt about that. Have a couple of men carry Mr. Gantry below, Mr. Buck. I'll set his leg. Then check up on the damage."

Deliberately the captain turned his back on the silent figure at the wheel, but his usually square shoulders sagged as he descended the companionway behind the crippled mate. The latter's eyes opened curiously, but he said nothing.

"Almost no damage, sir," Buck reported half an hour later. "Some running gear fouled and a few sails split. We didn't even loose a gasket. But three men went overboard."

"No damage at all?" The captain did not seem surprised.

"None."

"Ah, no," the captain said wearily. "There wouldn't be, of course. *He* still needs the ship."

Buck was taken aback by this cryptic acceptance of his news, and showed it. His eyes sought Gantry's. The mate, stretched out on the saloon table, his leg neatly lashed in rude splints, tapped his head furtively. Buck whistled soundlessly.

"How's the wind, mister?" the captain asked mechanically.

"She's come around. Blowin' out of the sou'west now, sir."

"Come about, and get some canvas on the ship. We'll run down our easting while we can."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"You take Mr. Gantry's watch, and have Wilkes take over yours, for the time being."

"I'd like to suggest, Captain—"

"Yes, Mr. Gantry?"

"Why not promote Vanderdecken? He's far and away the best sailor on board, even if he is dumb."

"*No!*" Captain Toll's big head snapped up and he froze, as though startled by the roar of his own voice. "No," he repeated. "Wilkes it is."

"But—"

"I'm master here."

Buck turned and went on deck. Gantry bit his lip and remained quiet while two sailors carried him to his room on the port side of the saloon. Through the porthole over his bunk the mate watched the blue seas rush past. The *Jasmine* was heeling gently, and the sun cut diagonally across the room. She would hold her new course for weeks, Gantry knew, the steady trades urging her ever closer to the Cape. There would be ice on deck before he returned to his duties. He began almost immediately to chafe at the enforced inactivity in prospect.

Buck stopped by after supper that night for a quiet pipe.

"Wonder what's gotten into the old man," he ventured.

"I don't know," Gantry said. "He nearly bit my head off this morning. He must have a grudge against that Dutchman."

"If we hadn't come through the storm like we did," Buck went on, "I'd say we were hoodooed. You mind that cargo of wine in the main hold, Mr. Gantry?"

"Aye."

"I tapped every cask this afternoon. It's all turned sour. For all the owners will make out of this voyage, we might as well run back to Frisco."

Gantry whistled softly. "How'd the old man take it?"

"That's funny, too. I told him, and he said: 'It doesn't make any difference, I'm afraid.' Those were his very words. 'It doesn't make any difference, I'm afraid.'"

"I've sailed with Captain Toll for years," Gantry said slowly. "I can't understand him acting like this. You'd think he was getting softening of the brain."

Buck, as though exhausted by such unaccustomed garrulity, sat back on the transom and smoked in silence. Six bells sounded forward before he knocked the dottle out of his pipe and leaned toward Gantry.

"There's another thing, Mr. Gantry. About the sailmaker, Vanderdecken. All day captain's been following him around, staring at him. It would drive me crazy. That Hollander's going to bounce a fid off the old man's skull if he don't belay it."

"Vanderdecken don't take watching," Gantry said. "He's about the best man on board, even if he does give me the shivers now and then. Guess it's just because he can't talk, only look at you, sort of."

"I wouldn't know," Buck said, rising. "But I don't like it one bit. Wish you were back on your feet, mister."

Buck found the captain pacing energetically up and down the weather side of the poop deck. He tried to catch the master's eye, but was unsuccessful. Instinctively his eyes roamed aloft. The *Jasmine* was rolling along under full sail, with everything drawing. The breeze, steady on the starboard beam, was still warm. Forward the mumble of voices came from an indistinct group on the fo'c's'le head.

"What's your course?" the second snapped at the helmsman, a lean, browned youth of twenty.

"Sou'-sou'east a half south."

Buck peered into the binnacle and grunted in confirmation. Then he started pacing the lee side of the deck. A sudden chill struck him and he shivered. He glanced forward. The usual faint loom of the port running light was magnified greatly. Even as he watched, the red glow flickered and was reflected.

"Fog!" he whispered hoarsely. "What next?"

Captain Toll, he saw, had ceased his pacing and was leaning wearily on the taffrail. He crossed to him.

"Seems to be a bit of fog, sir," he said.

"Of course, of course," the captain gritted. "I was expecting it." He looked at Buck and added, wordlessly: "God, man, don't you *know?*"

Buck wet his finger in his mouth and held it up. The breeze was still warm. He caught up a bucket, bent the end of the crojack brace to it and dropped it over the side. When it came up, brimming, he took a thermometer from the catchall under the companionway hatch and immersed it in the sea water.

"I'll be damned!" he exclaimed a few minutes later. "There ain't five degrees difference 'tween air and water. And we have *fog.*"

"We're all damned, Mr. Buck," the captain said solemnly.

He moved forward and disappeared down the companionway. Buck looked after him in amazement, his mouth open. Then he turned to the helmsman. Fear was written plainly across the boy's open face. Buck stamped forward to the break of the poop and leaned on the rail.

Light flooded the waist under him as a door opened. He saw Captain Toll step out on deck and walk forward. The captain's hand was buried in his jacket pocket, and he held his arm stiff. Buck, suddenly alarmed, dropped down the ladder silently and followed him. The captain went straight to the amidships house and called out quietly:

"Vanderdecken. Come out here a minute."

Through the open door Buck saw the sailmaker's long legs swing down from his bunk and heard the slap of bare feet on the deck. A second later the Hollander stepped over the sill.

"*I know you,*" Captain Toll said evenly.

Vanderdecken smiled—a ghastly smile. The captain's hand came out of his pocket clutching a heavy revolver. There was a double click as he thumbed back the hammer—then Buck sprang onto his back.

"Wilkes! Chips! Bear a hand, quick!"

"You fool!" the captain hissed, struggling to free his arm from Buck's viselike grip. "Let go!"

Out of the corner of his eye Buck saw the elderly bos'n and the big carpenter elbow the Hollander out of the way. Wilkes took in the situation at a glance and caught the captain's other arm just as his fist swung back for a blow at Buck's unguarded face.

"He's gone off his head," Buck gasped. "He tried to shoot the sailmaker. Fetch a line and help me tie him up."

"Fools!" The captain was literally frothing at the mouth. "You're dooming yourselves!"

"Take it easy, captain," Buck snapped. "Take it easy now."

The captain bit his lips till red blood flecked his white beard. He struggled savagely, but was helpless in the iron grip of three strong men. A minute later he was bound hand and foot. Buck picked up the fallen revolver.

"All right," he snapped at the crew, who had rushed amidships and were looking on curiously. "Watch below, go below. The rest of you, for'ard. Jump!"

VANDERDECKEN, suddenly relieved, crossed quietly to the lee main shrouds, in the shadow of the cradled launch. There he clung to the rigging and *laughed.* Soundlessly, with only his contorted face and heaving chest betraying his emotion.

"The *one* man on board!" the thought churned in his mind. "The *one* man on board who recognized me! And he's branded himself a *lunatic!* You poor fools, you deserve to die!"

"I heard a rumpus out on deck!" Gantry exclaimed when Buck entered his room ten minutes later. "What's up? Sounded like a mutiny."

Buck sighed and dropped onto the transom. He fished out his blackened pipe, carefully shaved some tobacco from an equally dark plug and waited until the pipe was drawing to his satisfaction before he spoke.

"Reckon you're in command now, mister," he said finally. "Captain Toll's gone completely crazy. He tried to shoot Vanderdecken. Called

him right out on deck and pulled a gun on him. Chips, the bos'n and I just lashed him to his bunk."

"Good Lord!" Gantry was aghast. A moment later he asked: "Why?"

Buck shrugged his shoulders.

"Captain's had it in for that Hollander ever since the storm. You'd think he blamed him for it, even if Vanderdecken saved the ship."

"He said he knew Sails," Buck remarked. "Maybe they've crossed before somewheres. I don't know. But I do know the old man's mind's adrift. He's dangerous."

A mournful hoot interrupted them. It was followed a minute later by another.

"Fog," Buck explained.

Gantry turned, lifted himself on an elbow and peered out the open porthole.

"*Fog!*"

"Came up quarter of an hour ago. Water's seventy-six degrees, air's eighty. Don't ask me why or how."

"How are we running?"

"Steady. Fairly close-hauled."

Gantry fumbled in the locker under his bunk and hauled out a big chart. Propping himself up, he unrolled it and ran his finger over the South Pacific area.

"If this wind holds, and we don't have any more trouble, we should fetch the Cape in two weeks," he said. "At this time of the year we should have a favoring wind to push us around."

"I hope so," Buck said. "This bark's not in any A1 shape. Frankly, mister, I don't see how we came through that last blow. It was a miracle the sticks didn't jump out of her."

"Well, we'll see," Gantry said. "Keep her as she is, and tomorrow get me up on deck."

With the exception of the ever-present fog, the next ten days passed uneventfully. But the blanketing mist kept everyone's nerves on edge, with the sole exception of Vanderdecken. The Hollander went about his duties calmly, and his professional skill with rope and canvas never ceased to intrigue Gantry.

"I swear, Buck," the mate said one morning as they watched the sailmaker run a herringbone stitch along a tear in the jigger stays'l with machinelike precision, "that man's spent his lifetime in sail. But where, in this day and age, could he learn what he knows? And he ain't old. Not more'n thirty, I'd say."

"These foreigners always take things seriously," Buck replied. "That's where they've got it over us."

The messboy appeared at the break of the poop with a steaming tray and Buck went forward to meet him. Together they entered the saloon and the second mate personally unlocked the door to the captain's cabin, which stretched across the stern of the ship.

"Don't you think, Mr. Buck," the captain said coldly, "that you can take these irons off me now?"

He rattled the handcuffs and chain that confined him to his bunk. A worried frown creased Buck's forehead.

"You feeling all right now, sir?" he asked.

"I have recovered, if that's what you mean."

"You tried to murder the sailmaker, you know, sir."

Captain Toll sighed. "Yes, I know," he said.

"I'll talk to Mr. Gantry," Buck said.

"The fools, the fools," the captain thought. "But I can't warn them. They're practical men. They've

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been educated. One word of the truth from me, and I'll die in these irons—off the Cape. A hint as to who, or *what,* Vanderdecken is, and I'll be a raving madman in their eyes."

But there was no rancor in the captain's mind. "No," he added to himself. "I'll have to save the ship myself."

Buck left and clumped up the companionway to the poop deck. When he returned a few minutes later he was swinging a heavy bunch of keys.

"Mr. Gantry says he thinks it's all right," he told the captain, "if you're sure you've gotten over your spell."

The captain nodded and Buck unlocked the handcuffs. "We *had* to do this, you understand, sir," he said.

"I understand," the captain said. "I'm not blaming you in the least."

With Captain Toll back on deck, a certain amount of the tension aboard vanished. Day after day the *Jasmine* plowed southward. It grew steadily colder, and the wind now bit through the men's ragged clothing. The fog now lifted occasionally, enough for the captain to take an observation. Removing the sextant from his eye one noon, he caught Vanderdecken watching him intently.

"Thanks," the captain snapped.

Vanderdecken smiled his cold smile, picked up his gear and went forward. Buck, who witnessed this, shifted nervously from foot to foot. Later he commented on it to Gantry.

"I wouldn't worry about it," the mate said. "There's obviously something between them, but it's not our business."

Ice shrouded the rigging and coated the decks the morning the lookout's hail of "Land ho!" floated down from the foretop.

"Ildefonso Island," Captain Toll commented. "Keep her as she is till six bells, then put her due east. If this wind holds, another twenty-four hours should put us clear of the Cape."

"That'll be a fast passage, sir," Buck said.

"It can't be any too fast for me, Mr. Buck," the captain replied. "I won't breathe easily till we've crossed the Line again—if we ever do."

Knowledge that they were approaching the worst passage of the voyage, with the odds for once in their favor, stirred the crew, and when the command came to go about, they leaped eagerly to the lines. On her new course, and running free, the big bark literally leaped ahead. All hands, watching the now-green water rush along the sides, were wreathed in smiles.

All that day Captain Toll remained on deck, following the Hollander wherever he went. Gantry, bundled in a deck chair lashed to ringbolts near the wheel, and Buck watched him nervously.

"I've got a feeling in my bones, Buck, that something's going to happen," the mate remarked in a low tone.

"Same here," Buck replied. "I wish we'd kept the skipper in irons. Have you still got his gun?"

Gantry slapped the outside pocket of his peacoat.

Night comes early in the far latitudes, and it was early in the first dogwatch that darkness overwhelmed them. A dull booming sounded to leeward. Buck glanced anxiously at Gantry, then at the captain. The latter ignored him. His eyes were fastened on Vander-

decken, who was clinging to the main weather shrouds.

"Better grab some food, Vanderdecken," Buck shouted, passing him. "It's all hands on deck tonight."

The Hollander turned, and Buck started at the unholy grin on the other's face. "He's a foul-weather bird, to be sure," the second muttered to himself.

Through the darkness the bark sped. The booming became louder, but Captain Toll seemed to ignore it until the wind hauled suddenly around to the southward. Then he barked orders. The *Jasmine's* helm came up and the crew hastily let go the weather braces. The bark shuddered, then, close-hauled, gathered way again, reaching far and wide.

"Listen to those breakers," Buck gritted to Gantry. "The old man's getting careless, or he's in a God-awful rush."

"He knows what he's doing," Gantry said. "If the wind continues to haul around, we may be beating back and forth here for a month. I was six weeks down here in '95."

The minutes slipped away, marked only by the oddly chilling tolling of the ship's bell. The wind freshened and thrust icy fingers through rents in the men's worn clothing. They huddled in what lee they could find in the break of the poop and fo'c's'le head. Still Captain Toll stood by the jigger shrouds and watched Vanderdecken, halfway aloft farther forward.

Dong-dong! dong-dong! dong-dong! dong-dong!

"Eight bells!" the captain roared. "Midnight! Do you hear, Vanderdecken?"

The Hollander turned and waved a hand.

"I hear, captain!" he bellowed.

"Now, that's done it," the captain gasped. "He's spoken at last."

Beside him, the crippled Gantry gripped his arm.

"My God! My God!" Gantry breathed. "Did you hear that, Buck? Did you hear Vanderdecken speak? The captain *knew!* We were mad, not he!"

A faint light glowed around the Hollander, perched high in the rigging. It grew stronger until it illuminated the entire deck. The sailors forgot the cold, forgot everything, as they gaped. Two old graybeards fell to mumbling forgotten prayers.

"Good-by, captain! Pleasant voyage!"

It was Vanderdecken speaking. The captain could not answer. His fingers gripped the icy taffrail until his knuckles stood out white. Then the Hollander was gone, vanished in a soundless explosion of light.

But only for a moment. The strange light, stronger than ever, reappeared in the sea. Vanderdecken was swimming, strongly and swiftly, through a boiling sea in which no mortal man could live.

"Sail ho!"

It was Chips, the carpenter. Even the fantastic leave-taking of his cabin mate could not destroy the sailor in him. He gripped the mizzen shrouds and pointed off the starboard bow. There, scudding before the wind, was a vessel that belonged back in the mists of time.

"A Dutch galiot!" Gantry rasped. "Lord help us, Buck. We've seen the Flying Dutchman!"

"Seen him!" Captain Toll laughed hysterically. "We've *carried* him from Frisco back to his phantom ship. Vanderdecken! He even used his own name. But we're not lost! Not yet!"

The other vessel drew nearer and nearer. Vanderdecken, treading water, held up his right arm. A line

curved out from the phantom ship and he was quickly drawn aboard. But she did not change course.

"Every hundred years," Captain Toll, strangely relieved, went on, "every hundred years *he* visits a mortal ship. He has seven years in which to mingle with human men. My grandfather— Damn you, helmsman! Hold your course! Hold your course!"

"We'll ram him sure!" Buck shouted. "Hard alee! Hard alee!"

"*No!*" the captain thundered. "*No!* We'll pile up on the rocks, mister! Keep her as she goes!"

He started across the slanting deck, slipped and fell. In a second he was on his feet again, running toward the wheel. But he was too late. The frightened helmsman, bewildered by conflicting orders and obeying instinct, let the bark fall off even as the Flying Dutchman crossed her bow.

Above the slatting of the spanker and stays'ls, and the rattling of the twisting yards, rose the captain's voice:

"You fools! You idiots! She's only a *phantom!* We could have sailed *through* her!"

Then the bark struck. Her steerageway gone, unmanageable, buffeted by the roaring sea and driving wind, she lifted high in the air and came down with a rending crash. The main topmast snapped and went over the side. The mizzen swayed, moaned like a lost soul, then followed it. With a rending crackle of splintering timbers the *Jasmine* broke in two and disappeared in the swirling breakers.

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Miss Eleanor F. Jourdain was vice principal for some years, and succeeded Miss Moberly as head of the college. She was an M. A. of Oxford, and a doctor of the University of Paris. Her knowledge of the French language was so extensive that her services were requested by the government during the war. She died in 1924.

These are the two ladies who testify to this remarkable story—ladies whose intelligence and character are unquestioned. Of the care with which they examined and substantiated each point of their experience, you shall judge for yourself.

Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain visited Versailles on August 10, 1901. They were residing in Paris at the time—Miss Moberly as the guest of Miss Jourdain—and were making expeditions to the various places of historical interest in the neighborhood. Neither lady had visited Versailles or the Trianon before; this was their first visit. They thought it might be a "dull expedition!"

While at Versailles, they decided to visit the Petit Trianon, a villa in the park at Versailles, which was a favorite resort of Marie Antoinette.

Although it had been hot all week, August 10th was pleasant —the sky overcast, hiding the strong sun, and a wind blowing. Leaving the palace at Versailles, they walked past the Grand Trianon, and came upon a drive that, had they known it, would have taken them directly to the building they sought. Instead, they crossed this drive and followed a lane. The course they took led through the gardens to the rear of the building.

Their preternatural experience probably began on this lane. It was

here they saw a plow, among other farm implements lying about near some buildings. It was here, too, that they inquired of two men directions to the Trianon. These men, who appeared to be guards of some sort, were dressed in green uniforms and wore three-cornered hats. They directed the ladies to proceed along a path, straight forward.

As they walked along the path, both became conscious of an inexplicable depression of spirits. Together with this feeling of depression, the landscape became eerily unnatural—windless, shadowless, and deeply silent. This impression of utter loneliness, and of deep stillness and silence, was one of the strongest features of their experience. And loneliness, stillness, a museumlike silence, form a background that might be expected by those who wander through the untraveled glades of Time, a century back.

At the end of the path they followed, where it was crossed by another, they encountered a thick woods. Set in among the trees, in the indefinable gloom they made, was a small, circular, roofed building, with a number of pillars and a low wall. Miss Moberly calles it "a light, garden kiosk," and it is this name—kiosk—that is applied to it throughout.

Seated, either near the kiosk or upon its steps, was a man of particularly evil countenance. His face was pock-marked, and his expression so repulsive that the ladies were genuinely alarmed. He wore a dark, heavy cloak and a large, slouch hat—clothes that seemed those of another period. As they approached he turned his head slowly toward them.

They heard with relief the sound of someone running toward them.

Turning, they found another, younger man close behind them. He was flushed with exertion, and very much excited. His clothes were of the kind worn by the man by the kiosk; the dark cloak was wrapped about him, with one end flying behind in the wind caused by his haste. He was speaking to them in a voice made breathless by hurry, and in the midst of a long sentence, most of which they lost, they caught the words, "*—cherchez la maison,*" and instructions to go to the right.

They were surprised both by his insistence and excitement, but went as he directed, crossing a small bridge by a tiny waterfall that descended on the right so close they could have wetted their hands in it. Beyond, they passed a meadow bordered by trees, and came within sight of the house.

At this point the two ladies were in the English garden, to the north of the house. A woman was seen here by Miss Moberly, but not by Miss Jourdain. Miss Moberly gives a very detailed description of her dress and appearance, which, like the men encountered, suggested a long-gone year. She was sitting, apparently upon a camp stool, near the house, and appeared to be sketching the trees before her, for she had a sheet of paper in her hand. As the two visitors passed her she turned

the paper so that its face could not be seen, and glanced up at them. Miss Moberly saw her again from behind, and confirmed her description of the woman's clothing.

They went up onto the terrace about the house and were approaching an unshuttered window when a man emerged from the doorway of a chapel standing close by. He called to them, and told them they must enter the house from the front. Guiding them down through the French gardens, on the west side of the house, it seemed to the two ladies that he regarded them with concealed amusement. He led them to an entrance to the drive. And with that Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain stepped back into the twentieth century.

They joined a French wedding party in the front entrance hall, and were conducted with them through the building. The feeling of unnaturalness and depression vanished; but not, says Miss Jourdain, until they had actually reached the front entrance to the Petit Trianon. Following the tour of the building they took a carriage and drive back to Versailles.

Upon their return to Paris the two ladies discussed their experience, and wondered about the strange persons they had encountered, and the weird feeling of oppression they both acknowledged to have known. But it wasn't until three months later, in November, they discovered that Miss Moberly had seen the woman outside the house and Miss Jourdain had not. Convinced then their experience had been no ordinary one. they determined to write separate reports of the expedition to the Petit Trianon, and to investigate the history of the locale.

The description I have given of this expedition is a condensation of these reports. The original statements, written and signed by the two ladies, are preserved in the Bodleian Library, at Oxford, England, together with the written testimony of more than twenty persons who had heard the ladies describe the Gardens as they had seen them before it was known that there was anything unusual in the descriptions.

In this library, also, are Miss Jourdain's notebooks, in which the daily results of her researches were noted, and all the original letters which were exchanged by the ladies during the investigation.

It was toward the identification of the persons they had seen that the early investigations were directed. Beginning with the two guards who had first given them directions, each of these persons—their clothing, their appearance—was investigated down to the minutest detail, even to the stockings worn by the guards.

Informed persons at Versailles told the ladies it was impossible they could have seen guards dressed in green at the Trianon, unless the men were masqueraders, for green was royal livery, worn by no attendants at the Trianon of this century. But that green liveries had been worn there in the past was established beyond question.

So with the others. In all, they had encountered eight persons, but never more than two at a time. These persons, they learned through years of research, were attired in the morning costume of the closing years of the eighteenth century. "We have never," say the authors, eerily, "seen them exactly portrayed in any pictures of the costumes of that period." It is weirdly like talking to a

being from that Past; an observer aware of the minute discrepancies which must have crept into all our histories, into all our picturizations of things of the Past.

On the day of January 2, 1902, Miss Jourdain went again to Versailles, her second visit. She went directly to the Temple de l'Amour, and ascertained that it was *not* the building—the kiosk—seen on their first visit. From here she went on to the Hamlet, a group of cottages and farm buildings situated near a lake. On her way to the Hamlet she again became conscious of the strange feeling of oppression which had been so marked a characteristic of the first visit to the Gardens. Miss Jourdain says it was as though she "had crossed a line and was suddenly in a circle of influence." That statement is potently significant. Does, or did, some strange, time-bridging extra dimension offer a threshold to this time, this place, in the Gardens of the Trianon?

At the Hamlet itself the feeling of gloom was very strong. After leaving the Hamlet she entered a thick woods, set with a multitude of paths, in which Miss Jourdain wandered for some time. She heard voices speaking in French, and the faint music of stringed instruments, a few bars of which she was able to write from memory afterward. Authorities later recognized in these bars the idiom of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

A gardener gave her directions, and when she had returned to Versailles she inquired about the music, and was informed that no band had played in the Gardens that day. No such gardener as she had seen was employed in the Trianon of the present.

During the next two years Miss Jourdain made several visits to the Trianon, and never was she able to find the paths they had followed in 1901, nor even the woods in which she had wandered and heard the music!

Of this she informed Miss Moberly, and on July 4, 1904, the two friends returned again to the Gardens of the Trianon, set upon finding the paths they had followed on their memorable first visit.

They were utterly unsuccesful. Paths, buildings, bridge, woods, were gone, vanished, replaced by a new and different topography! The landscape they had seen—if it ever had existed—existed no longer!

Their bewilderment can be imagined. What more uncanny sensation than to find the supposedly stable earth fluctuant, shifting, insecure, or to see such solid things as trees, hills, buildings, vanish into nothing, and leave less trace than last year's leaves? Even though she had been prepared for this change by the letters of her friend, Miss Moberly was shaken and astonished. She had not, she says, "expected such complete disillusionment."

And so their investigations turned from the people seen to the landscape itself, and the research into historical topography which was to last for years began. In the face of the most contradictory evidence, and against the statements of authorities, they persisted that their descriptions were accurate. And slowly, piece by piece, they proved that each feature of the landscape as they remembered it had at one time existed!

Evidence on more than seventy points of minute historical detail, concerned primarily with alteration and rearrangement of the land surface, was assembled, substantiating

in full the descriptions of the Gardens given by Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain in 1901—but placing the Gardens as they described them in the year 1789!

This second adventure, although not as thrilling as that walk through the Gardens of the Trianon in 1901, is, in one way, just as important. Its results, the evidence so slowly compiled and so unanswerable, make of that walk something more than an intriguing story; make of it a startling question, challenging all man's knowledge, all the boundaries and limits he has set about the universe, and about reality. It is a signpost, lettered in a language we do not know, and pointing into the dark night of the unknown.

The papers dealing with their adventure, and with the subsequent historical research, are preserved, as has been said, in the Bodleian Library. At the Archives Nationales and the Bibliothèque Nationale, where these researches were conducted, are the dates of each of Miss Jourdain's visits, and her signature on each occasion.

This evidence, vouched for by these institutions, answers the questions of those who ask what proof there is that the "vision" preceded the investigation, and of those who suggest that, after learning through research or by conversation some detail of the topography of the Trianon Gardens, the ladies unconsciously believed themselves to be remembering those details from the occasion of their walk in the Gardens in 1901. Such a theory is utterly inconsistent with the documents which these institutions possess.

Another theory advanced was that Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain had seen actors in costume for a fête, or a motion picture, for which the Gardens were a setting.

The two ladies investigated this possibility thoroughly, entering into correspondence with film companies, and examining the available records. M. Pératé, coadjutator at Versailles, informed them there had been a fête, in June, 1901. Miss Jourdain checked this in the Day-book of Permissions. No fête had been held in August, 1901, nor had any photographs been taken in that month. Those photographs taken in June were taken at the Hamlet, in a different part of the Gardens. M. Pératé's letter, definitely asserting the fact that no photographs were taken in August, 1901, is with the other papers at the Bodleian.

With characteristic thoroughness the two friends did not rest with this, but sought confirmation from the photographers of Paris, who assured them that no photographs had, to their knowledge, been taken in the Trianon Gardens on August 10, 1901.

A writer in *Chamber's Journal* asserted that Pathé was making a picture in the Gardens on that day. Pathé was queried. They replied, giving the date the picture was made —January 24, 1910. Nine years later.

But such a theory makes no attempt to explain the landscape the ladies had seen on that first visit, and which the evidence assembled through the years seems to prove conclusively was the landscape of 1789.

This evidence is mustered with painstaking care. For each smallest item a reference to some authority, frequently to several separate authorities, is given. There is not space here for a detailed examination of this evidence, but a number of points

are so startling and significant that I feel they deserve inclusion.

One of the most interesting features is the story of the two maps. The only known map of the Trianon of 1789 was La Motte's copy of Mique's original. (Mique was landscape gardener for Marie Antoinette. He was guillotined in 1794.) By La Motte's map some features of the landscape were not located at the points where the ladies remembered to have seen them. Apparently the descriptions of Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain were incorrect. But in 1903 Mique's original map was discovered—*and it placed each of these features just where the ladies had seen them in 1901!* La Motte's map had been incorrect. (Mique's original map was found thrust into the chimney of a house in Montmorency. It was uncovered when the chimney, of which it formed part of the stuffing, was cleared.)

Besides this map, which depicted the bridge they had crossed—and which authorities assured them had never existed—the two friends discovered, in 1908, protruding from a rock located within the area wherein they remembered the bridge to have been, two "peculiar projections"—which might have formed the supports for a small bridge."

Mique's map also established the kiosk at the spot the ladies had encountered it, and they finally discovered in the French National Archives an estimate of the cost of such a kiosk, and the actual sum paid for its erection. Further, Miss Jourdain discovered in the Gardens a part of a broken column, half buried in a tree growing around it!

Then there was the mystery of what the two ladies call "the chapel man." As they remembered it, and

wrote of it in their records, he walked directly to them from a door in the chapel to the point at which they were standing on the terrace around the main building of the Little Trianon. As these buildings are related today, that would be impossible. To go from one to the other it would be necessary to descend a flight of steps, cross a lawn, and ascend a second flight of steps to the terrace.

But in 1910 the fact was established that there had at one time existed a covered passage from the house to the chapel. The roof of this passage had formed a terrace joining the terrace about the house to the small terrace outside the chapel door.

This chapel is today in a ruinous condition. The door used by the "chapel man" is reached from the inside only by a staircase which has been completely broken down since about 1885. In 1907 a guide told Miss Jourdain that the doors of the

chapel had not been opened for fifteen years.

The "chapel man" was definitely conscious of the presence of the two ladies. He not only addressed them, and escorted them out to the drive, but also regarded them, they thought, inquisitively, and with amusement. At what was he amused? Their clothes? Their speech? Did he, perhaps, return to his chapel and tell of the two odd visitors to the Gardens, English by their accent, who spoke such a queer French, and wore such ridiculous clothing? Coming from a time more than a hundred years in the future, they must have seemed very strange to him. At any rate the man saw them.

The road leading to the drive along which the man had guided them is no longer existing. The point at which it joined the drive is now occupied by buildings, and if the ladies passed along this road in 1901 *they walked through the solid walls of the twentieth century!*

Mique's map placed the road where they remembered it, and in 1910 they found signs of an old road on the walls and the base of the buildings which now occupy the spot.

The ladies had seen, at the start of their walk in 1901, a plow lying near some farm buildings. It seemed unlikely that a plow would be part of the equipment of the Gardens. There is none there at present. But listed in the catalogue of the Trianon sale after the King's death is a plow. It was purchased by Louis XV, who had had lessons in plowing given to his grandson, the dauphin. And in a shop on the *Quai des Grand Augustins* the two investigators found an old engraving, which had never been reproduced, showing the dauphin—later Louis XVI—driving this plow. Was it the same plow which these two wanderers into another century had seen lying in the Gardens?

And so the evidence is marshaled, bit by bit. I have only briefly recounted what you may read for yourself in full in the book written by Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain. It is entitled "An Adventure," and is well worth the attention of all possessed of an open mind. A preface by J. W. Dunne, the English physicist, discussed the theory of Serialism in relation to this adventure, and will be of interest to those equipped to follow this hypothesis of abstract and fourth-dimensional Time.

In August, 1913, the two ladies walked through the grounds accompanied by two Frenchmen, one a distinguished scholar, the other a colonel of a French regiment who was an authority on the history of French uniforms. As far as the alterations permitted, they retraced the route taken in 1901.

The colonel had the ladies describe in detail the uniforms worn by the guards they had seen at the incep-

tion of their walk, and told them the description was perfectly correct for the year 1789. He also made the statement that it would have been almost impossible for them to have given this description unless they had seen these uniforms, for such information was very difficult of access, even for himself, an officer in the service.

These gentlemen checked each of the points of their story, and in many cases were able to explain the changes that had taken place, and the reason for them.

The actual pathway Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain had followed on their first visit to the Gardens had been destroyed, they learned, by Louis Philippe when he had had the ground in that vicinity leveled.

In 1908 Miss Jourdain again experienced, for the third and last time, what we may only describe as time-travel. It was on one of her many subsequent visits to the Trianon, and happened on the lane which had first led them both back into another century. In her own words, she "knew that some indefinable change had taken place." She felt as though she "were being taken up into another condition of things quite as real as the former." (That may be an actual eyewitness' description of the experience of time-travel!) She glanced back to see the landscape of the present fading, and that of their original visit taking its place. Miss Jourdain continued as she had been going, and after leaving the lane the strangeness vanished. What if she had turned back—

One more point, which is no more than touched upon at the back of their book, seems to me pregnant with significance. In 1914 the two adventurers were visited by a family whose name is withheld. This family had lived in Versailles for two years, in 1907 and 1908. They, too, had inexplicable experiences in the Gardens of the Trianon—they found the topography and the light so frequently eerie and disturbing that it finally got on their nerves to such an extent that they departed.

This family had seen some of the landscape features described by Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain, and were able to locate them accurately on a map of the Gardens.

But, more than this, this family reported a "curious hissing sound—and a vibration in the air," which to them suggested an electrical field. Upon hearing this, the authors of "An Adventure" referred to an almanac. They learned that August 10, 1901, was the date of an electric storm which had included the whole of Europe—

If you admit that these two ladies were not the victims of an hallucination, and not deliberate liars—and the evidence in their favor seems to me to surmount all objections—then a speculative vista lies before you in which no boundaries may be seen. I shall attempt no exploration here, but I would like to present one feature which might easily be overlooked.

How many others have made similar trips through time? Remember that Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain were intellectual women, they were careful and painstaking research workers, and above all, they were alert enough to record immediately a history of their unique experience.

Now place in their position another person, ignorant, or superstitious, or merely someone who feared ridicule, and knew that such a story

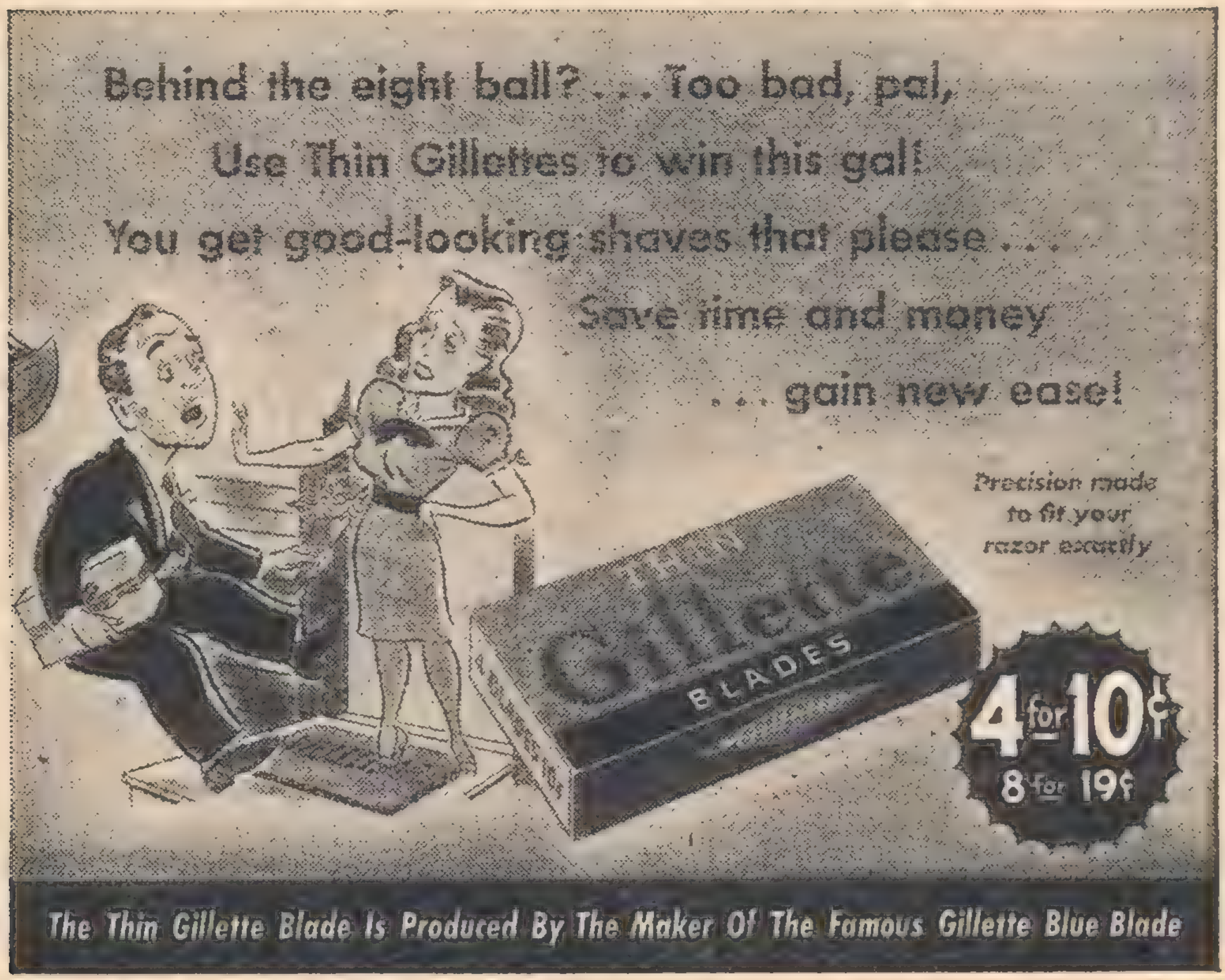
coming from himself would provoke nothing else. Would that story ever have been recorded, or ever published?

Although no explanation for their experience, considering the evidence, has been offered, there is no reason to believe that it could not happen to anyone—to you, perhaps. The case of the family residing in Versailles during 1907 and 1908 is an example. Perhaps others, unknown, undistinguished, keeping their secret to themselves, have also traveled in time; further back, possibly, than the authors of "An Adventure," even, it may be, into the future.

I wonder, too, why the Petit Trianon has not been the site and subject of experiments with time, in so far as the science of our day can investigate such matters; why have not the daring, who would venture into this undiscovered country of dimensional time, been drawn to it? By its record it is the pre-eminent site for such experiments, challenging the fearless.

I should also like to add, for those who may read "An Adventure," that excellent color photographs of the park at Versailles, and of the grounds of the Trianon, can be seen in the *National Geographic Magazine* for January, 1925. There clings to these scenes, it seems to me, an aura of strangeness, a shadowy suggestion of something beyond.

But that, I am sure, is because I had just read this amazing book, "the record," in the words of Edith Olivier, "of an unexplained extension of the limits of human experience—"



BOOK REVIEW

THE STORY OF PROPHECY, by Henry James Forman; Farrar & Rhinehart—1936—$3.00.

HERE is a book that students of psychic research and science-fiction fans alike will find interesting and informative. The author, after exhaustive study, has created an absorbing tale that takes in a great deal of history, combined with the facts and cases embracing the subject in question: prophecy.

The story begins with some legends of the Grecian oracles that have become well known. Most cases, it is admitted, were simply shrewd judgment often coupled with an ambiguous meaning or interpretation. The Pyramid Prophecy then follows. Aside from the well-known thesis that the Great Pyramid does have some remarkable scientific facts attached to it, the Pyramidologists would have us believe that the Great Pyramid contains the history of mankind up to the year 2001 A. D.

The author then treats Biblical Prophecy, Medieval Times and Astrology in order. Many of the prophecies of these earlier times are discussed with a realization of the corruption and degeneracy of these periods which encouraged the widespread use of prophecy as a means of predicting inevitable punishment.

However, as the narrative reaches more modern times—i. e., 1550 onward—the predictions are more and more startling as compared with the facts as known. For example, there has been much discussion about the Malachi Prophecies concerning the popes. Believed to have been written during the Twelfth Century, they were first printed in 1595. Nevertheless, that doesn't account for their surprising accuracy since then.

Each of the one hundred and five popes since 1143 has been described by a short Latin phrase which usually covers the family coat of arms, place of origin, or important incident concerning the pope in question. For example: Ninety-fourth, "Rosa Umbriae"—Clement XIII (1758-69). Before election he had been governor of Rieti in Umbria whose symbol is the rose.

Or the following one: Ninety-fifth, "Ursus Velox"—Nimble Bear—applied to Lorenzo Gagnelli—Clement XIV (1769-74). Family coat of arms was a bear running in full course.

Or a third: One hundred and second "Lumen in cœlo"—a light in the heavens—Leo XIII (1878-1903). The family coat of arms bears prominently a shooting star or comet.

Or the War pope: One hundred and fourth, Benedict XV (1914-22) has "religio depopulata"—i. e., "Christianity depopulated."

Another prophet, the Monk of Padua, went one better. He simply named and described the popes from his time to the end of the papacy. Thus far he has named twenty of twenty-two correctly.

There will be six more popes to come—thus say both; then the apparent end of the papacy and the power of the Catholic Church. The line of popes is to be culminated by the rule of Peter the Roman, who will "lead his sheep to pasture in the midst of numerous tribulations; the city of seven hills will be destroyed. The twilight settles—indeed, the depth of night before the promised dawn."

Life expectancy averages for the popes—about nine years apiece—say that this will occur about the year 2000. The Pyramid Prophecy does not run beyond 2001, while other predictions also point to unusual happenings at the same time.

At last we reach the greatest European, and possibly the greatest prophet of all time, Michel de Notre Dame, or Nostradamus, whose one thousand four-line verses recount French and World history from 1555 to 3797. As probably the oddest précis writer, he packed a world of meaning and history into each of the verses, which are often incomprehensible until the event occurs, whereupon the light revealed is blinding in its awful intensity.

Nostradamus named places, dates, people and events with an accuracy that is well-nigh unbelievable. He foresaw the French Revolution, the putting to death of the king, the Reign of Terror, the coming of Napoleon, the twenty months of Oliver Cromwell and many other events too numerous to mention. He predicts the aërial destruction of Paris by Asiatic invaders in October, 1999. However, one other prediction can be mentioned here for the benefit of those who care to wait and see: During the reign of the present pope—Pastor Angelicus—a king shall come to France, to be known as the "Grande Monarque" or "Grande Celtique." He will reign for fifty years, bringing France great glory, and restoring peace and order to the world for a while.

Originals of Nostradamus' works are still in existence, while numerous commentaries throughout the centuries check and recheck the astounding fulfillments.

Then Scotch, German, English and other seers are discussed, followed by the remarkable prophecies of Jaques Cazotte. The latter foretold happenings to noted people during the French Revolution. Finally, more recent cases, which are now more often documented as not, provide an interesting anticlimax.

The author concludes with a speculative glance at the future, which is universally prophesied to be greater and finer in all respects—allowing for the eternal optimism of man.

The book, as a whole, gives a broad picture of the subject, with a few explanations, only today being developed. It presents an open and clear-minded attitude, leaving the reader ultimately to decide for himself.

M. LIEBERMAN.

"I TALKED WITH GOD"

(yes, I did—actually and literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, drive a lovely car, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You too may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 7, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 7, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

JOHNNY ON THE SPOT

He was always accused in every murder around the city—

by FRANK BELKNAP LONG, JR.

I WAS Johnny on the spot. I had left a guy lying in a dark alley with a copper-jacketed bullet in him, and the cops were naming me. They were also naming a torpedo named Jack Anders. Anders had ducked out of the alley, the back way, without stopping to see if I was tagging after. The bullet had come out of Anders' gun, but I was as much to blame as he was for what had happened.

Wait—I've got to be honest about this. I was *more* to blame. He was the trigger man, but I had put the finger on the guy in the first place. I wanted to get away from the bright lights, because when I stared at my hands in the glare of the street lamps they seemed to change color. I couldn't stand the sight of myself in the light. My red hands—

In the dark I could forget about my hands. I wanted to dance in darkness to the strains of soft music. It was a screwy sort of urge—considering. All over town the teletype was naming me. By going into that taxi dance hall I was exposing myself to more publicity on the same night.

I should have stayed with the crowds in the street. But I'm a restless sort of guy. When I get a yen I have to satisfy it, even if it means extra leg work for the cops.

A dozen heavily rouged dolls in romper suits were standing around under dim lights when I entered the hall. I walked past the ticket window and mingled with the sappy-looking patrons. The Johnnies who patronize taxi dance halls are all of one type—dumb, awkward-looking clucks who have to shell out dough to get favors from dames.

With me it's different. All I have to do is snap my little finger. I don't mean I could have got by in there without buying a ticket. Not for long. But there's a rule which says you can look the dames over and walked out again if you're not suited. All I did at first was mingle with the patrons and size up the dames. And that's how I came to overhear the conversation.

The two dames who were whispering together were standing off in one corner, away from the ropes. One was a blonde with cold eyes and an "I've been around" look.

The other girl was young and sweet. I could tell just by looking at her that she hadn't been around at all.

The blonde's eyes were boring like a dental drill into the younger girl's face. I stood close beside her, listening to what she was saying. She wasn't giving that poor kid a ghost of a break.

"You're pretty smart, aren't you?" she taunted. "You think you've got something."

The dark-haired girl shook her head. "No, Dixie, no. I didn't say that. I don't know why he likes me. I swear I don't."

"Quit stalling, hon. You know how to use what you've got. You're smart, all right, but not as smart as I am. I'm taking him away from you, see?"

Sudden terror flared in the younger girl's eyes. She grasped her companion's wrists and twisted her about.

"You can't do that! I love him. I love him, do you hear?"

The blonde wrenched her wrist free. "You'll get over it, hon," she sneered, her lips twisting maliciously. "They all do. I can't help it if I like the guy."

"You like him because he's rich. Not for what he is. You got lots of men crazy about you."

"Sure, I have. But Jimmy's different. Maybe I do love his dough. So what? Don't you love his dough?"

"I swear I don't, Dixie. I'd love him if he didn't have a cent."

"He's all you've got, eh? Well, ain't that too bad?"

"You won't take him away, Dixie. Promise me you won't."

Dixie laughed. "I'm taking him tonight, hon. I've had plenty of experience with guys like Jimmy."

I knew then that Dixie was the

girl for me. I stepped up to her and held out my arms.

"Dance, honey?" I said.

She was plenty startled. She stared at me for an instant in a funny sort of way. Like she knew I was standing there, but couldn't see me.

Then her arms went out and around my shoulders. We started to dance, moving out into the hall.

We were in the middle of the floor when something seemed to whisper deep inside of me: "Now, now, while the lights are low and the music is like a whisper from the tomb."

I stopped dancing suddenly and clasped her in my arms. "You'll never take Jimmy away from her," I whispered.

She was a smart one, that girl. She recognized me an instant before I kissed her. She whimpered in terror and struggled like a pinioned bird in my clasp.

"Spare me," she moaned. "Come back in a year, a month. I'll be waiting for you. I won't run out on you, I swear it."

"You played me for a sap," I said. "You were warned about your ticker, but you went right on dancing."

"I'll stop tonight," she promised wildly. "Give me a few days—a week."

I shook my head. "Sorry, girlie. This is the payoff."

It's funny how near I can get to people without frightening them. When she sagged to the floor the couples about us went right on dancing. The lights were so dim they didn't notice her lying still and cold at my feet.

For three or four seconds no one noticed her. Then one of the girls saw her and screamed. All over the floor men and women stopped dancing and crowded about her. I knew that in a moment they would be naming me again. So I slipped silently from the place.

I do not like to be named. In that dance hall I was just a lonely guy looking for a dame to waltz with. I am only Death when I strike, and between times I am like the people about me.

Maybe you'll meet me sometime in a crowd. But you won't recognize me because I take color from my surroundings. I am always fleeing from what I have to do. I am a Johnny on the spot. But in the end—in the end I meet up with practically everyone.

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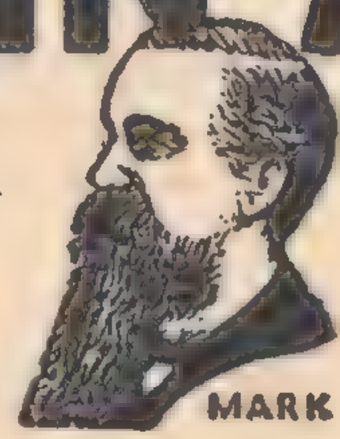

The Moving Finger Writes,

---AND HAVING WRIT---

Naturally the shorts improve. We're training a new group of authors in a new style.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

In re September Unknown vs. October Unknown.

In "None But Lucifer," H. Gold and L. de Camp spoil what might have been a great story by inserting their personal economic theories. In my opinion two good authors should not collaborate; witness what happened when Weinbaum and Farley combined. They turned out a good story, as in the above case, but Weinbaum was, as De Camp now is, incomparable. However, you may chalk up a point for the prosecution.

The "Caliph of Yafri" did not appeal to me at all. The short stories were uniformly good, especially Cummings' angle taken from Edgar Allan Poe. All in all, a fairly good issue.

In the October issue I came across "The Elder Gods." This story does not compare as fiction with Stuart's great masterpieces of science-fiction, "Forgetfulness," and those classic "Aesar" stories. As literary work, however, I believe that this transcends Stuart's other works. I had the strangest feeling of reading the blank verse of Shakespeare during the first half of the story.

"The Enchanted Week End" appealed to me as much as the "Caliph" disagreed with me. The shorts were all good. I believe that the quality of these shorts is improving, issue to issue. It is quite evident that Stein cannot draw human hair, as per the filaments of the three gods.

Verdict is in favor of the October issue, the defendant.—Frank Holby, 133 Noe St., San Francisco, Calif.

Heh, heh! The gun will jam!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Thanks a million for the best fantasy story I've ever read. Of course I mean "None But Lucifer." Gold and De Camp did such a marvelous job that I'm afraid I'll wear out the magazine reading it.

"The Coppersmith," which would have been the best story if "None But Lucifer" had been omitted, ran a poor second in this issue. It's so far behind it that it can be classified only as an "Also-ran."

A little by-line under the name of story which read like this: Illustrated by —— attracted my attention. Please keep it in, for I fear that if it's omitted some of us letter writers are going to get angry and work our way into your office by the "indirect method" and shoot you. I hope our gun won't jam.

I didn't enjoy the "Caliph of Yafri." It's possible the quality of "None But Lucifer" spoiled it.

"Portrait" was well written, but there was nothing marvelous about it.

"Danger: Quicksand" was downright rotten. I think Guernsey ought to take a rest; he's written too frequently, and only "The Hexer" was worth reading.

The article by Russell was pretty poor after what "Sinister Barrier" led us to expect from him. It was too disconnected. I'm not denying the possibility that those people actually saw "things," but maybe they were meteors—I don't know.

I am probably inviting criticism, but I *do* like the cover. The illustrations inside the mag are poor—but with the addition of Schneeman, the best S.F. illustrator, it should pick up.

One more thing: Keep putting authors' names on back of cover—sorry to disagree with you, Searles—but take them off front cover illustration.—Seymour Liff, 823 East 46th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

"—some like it hot—"

Dear Sirs:

Fine work you are doing with your new magazine.

The August issue was an excellent one. I liked all the stories with the exception of "Misguided Halo," which I thought was a poor piece of writing. The original idea of the halo is a good one; I chuckled when I saw, or thought I saw, the outcome. I expected much brilliant and amusing dialogue, many hilarious situations, and a deft handling of the theme.

I got none.

Kuttner did better in high school.

The story was below his standard and yours, too.

But that's my first beef in six issues. I like your magazine. That was supposed to be the general idea when I started out, but as you have seen, I got side-tracked.—Charles Burbee, Jr., 1059 S. Normandie Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

The "Jr." on the end of his name is the answer.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Six issues of Unknown and still the stories defy classification. In fact, the magazine's title seems to be the best classification—Unknown.

We do learn from experience, don't we? Two years ago the July issue of *Astounding* came out with untrimmed edges and yours truly promptly fired in a letter of protest only to feel foolish when the August issue appeared nicely shaven and shorn. So-o-o when the July (is July jinxed or something?) issue of Unknown came out rough cut this year I nobly restrained the impulse to scorch in a similar letter. Sure enough, the August issue came out nicely barbered, for which, hooray.

Who's Fritz Leiber, Jr.? There's an actor in Hollywood by that name. Any relation?

The illustrations, with a few exceptions, rarely live up to the quality set by the stories. "The Ghoul," for instance, had a series of illustrations far more suited to a comic strip than a story. The most delicious of foods taste flat without salt.

And having writ—I'll quit.—Richard H. Jamison, Route #1, Valley Park, Missouri.

Unknown uses any type, any style of story, so it fulfills the requirement "It must entertain."

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Thanks a lot for the September Unknown. It provides plenty of material for thought and argument, even if the position assumed by its authors is not agreed with.

"None But Lucifer" is, I believe, the best since "Sinister Barrier." It is rather profound in spots, and is an excellent commentary, from one point of view, upon life in general. Although it wasn't particularly disturbing—to me, at least—it was deeply interesting. The reason it didn't disturb me was that it didn't quite manage to make its central idea real to me—possibly the conflict was too great between the scenes of everyday life in which it was laid and the fantastic background. But that didn't at all detract from its merit.

And now for the other "uncomfortable" item—the article by Russell. Shades of Fort! And much imitation of his style, too—not that that matters. But the article did what it was intended to do; it made me wonder a bit, in an uneasy way, and ponder the events it related. And I enjoyed it in spite of the obscure and equivocal style in which it was written, and in spite of the labored and ponderous wit or sarcasm—or so it seemed—with which it was sprinkled. It seems to me that that sort of thing is quite unnecessary; it detracts needlessly from the subject matter and adds nothing of value.

The purpose of the article is, apparently, to inform or tell of something; and the elaborate digs at orthodox obtuseness and similar things merely create a confusion. I'm all for articles of this sort—but not too many—but if we have them, let's have them a little more straightforward. And it is well to keep in mind when reading something of this sort that the hypothesis is a fantastic and wild conjecture fitting certain facts; and that such conjectures are more useful in that they create a tendency to think upon those facts, than that they give any idea of the underlying truth.

Remember the phlogiston theory? Almost invariably the explanation, when it does turn up, is absurdly simple and natural, unfortunately displacing the fascinating theories that have been constructed. So while the idea of Venusians using our own private planet for their own purposes is quite exciting, I'll regard it as something more of entertainment than of actuality. And, by the way, most recent spectroscopic tests of the atmosphere of Venus fail to give any indication of water vapor, and most astronomers are inclined to believe that those thick clouds are composed of dust.

Ray Cummings' "Portrait" reminded me strongly of Poe's "The Oval Portrait"; same underlying idea. In my opinion it was the best of the shorts. And I'm glad to see that Schneeman did the illustration for it—the best illustration in the mag. Incidentally, I didn't care for the cover; use Scott sparingly, please, if at all.

Would you consider printing stories by, or similar to those of, Clark Ashton Smith or Lovecraft? Theirs is the best of the fantasy sort, you know—or won't Unknown go in for that type? That reminds me: Stuart's coming story, "The Elder Gods," sounds very much like Lovecraft—and I'm all for it.

Concluding, then, and taking a general survey of the latest Unknown, I should say that it's the best since the first, although the shorts, perhaps, fell a little short of the mark.—Ralph C. Hamilton, 846 College Avenue, Wooster, Ohio.

Report!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Since finishing the latest Unknown, I have been groping for words adequate to express my praise for and appreciation of the Stuart story, "The Elder Gods," in that issue. I decided that such words were not to be found, and I'd just tell you that instead. Specifically, I think it beats—in its way, which can't be compared to some of the previous stories—anything yet published in Unknown. Thanks for printing it—and how about the sequel it seems to suggest?

Second place in the issue I'd tie between "Anything" and "God in a Garden." Third to "The Enchanted Week End." Beard's poem was good.

And that's all I can think of.—C. H. Chandler, 920 College Avenue, Wooster, Ohio.

On the presentation of odd facts—

Dear Mr. Campbell:

"None But Lucifer" is an excellent story which I am doing my best to forget, without success.

"Caliph of Yafri" let me down. It was the fault of the guy who writes those drawing captions, of course. Grrr!

"Danger: Quicksand" is well written, with an almost nonexistent plot.

"The Coppermith" picks up toward the last. Not up to Del Rey's first standard, but a darn sight better than his last two.

"Portrait" suffers from a very, very obvious plot.

And "Over the Border" has the same fault as "Lo!"—it make you wade through a disconnected string of places and dates before it come across with deductions. Consequently, you hurry through the thing in order to find out what the hell it's all about, and then, if you want to get any sense out of it, you have to go and read the places and dates all over again.

Why not quit beating around the bush, O Followers of Fort, and simply begin by saying, "It is my—or our, if you must—theory that this Earth is being constantly and consistently invaded by intelligent turnips from Jupiter, and here are the facts to prove it:"?—Damon Knight, 803 Columbia Street, Hood River, Oregon.

We point with some pride to one other item regarding "None But Lucifer": perfect timing!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Usually it takes me four or five days to fight through a magazine long-story, therefore, when a story only takes one day to

read, as did "None But Lucifer," I consider that story well worth the effort of writing a letter in praise thereof.

In a way, "None But Lucifer" is very much like another story which held me for a day: "Sinister Barrier"; the resemblance lying in the pulling together of a large number of facts or events to support a colossal theory about the Earth. "Sinister Barrier" gave us a scientific or mechanistic theory of man's place is the Universe, whilst "None But Lucifer" offers a spiritualistic viewpoint. Both were exceedingly convincing because the authors were not afraid to give us full details of their reasoning. Not very often does one see in a magazine the amount of political and economic talk that went into "None But Lucifer," nor is such penetration and feeling often shown. I think that the sentence, "Anything you do, no matter what it is, will increase the misery and torments of the people, because that is how Hell is constructed," displays a deep truth and a deep cynicism of how things are today.

There are perhaps one or two points against the theory as a whole—how come the uplift religious people get? I really don't think a God (I assume that there is a God if Gold and De Camp assume there is a Devil), would allow His glory to be used as a means of torture. Then, where do animals come in? What misery do butterflies give us? I expect that Gold and De Camp could think up an explanation for everything, but I guess the need is not serious enough to bother them for an all-round airtight explanation—if this thing really is serious, Gold and De Camp are already on their way to being co-managers of Hell.

In addition to its other merits of fine writing, unusual love interest, fullness of explanation and an admirable restraint in the character of Lucifer, this story was graced with a most fitting climax, in fact, the only climax that would fit perfectly Mr. Lucifer's final words to Hale were wonderfully poignant.

This type of story is to be heartily appreciated; it sets out to give not only a tale, but a philosophy. Like "Sinister Barrier," it stalks over fresh ground and challenges our conventionalisms and beliefs. Mr. Campbell, Mr. Gold and Mr. de Camp, you are a service to mankind!—Eric Williams, Science-Fiction Association, 11 Clowders Road, Catford, London S. E. 6, England.

Read "Doubled In Brass"—Ellowman's comeback!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Please, please, don't change the tone of Unknown; it's what I've been looking for for years.

I like things like del Rey's "Coppersmith" and Cummings' "Portrait," in the September issue, but have never been lucky enough to find any, except once in a blue moon.

"None But Lucifer" was vague and inconsistent in places, but the theme is unique; "Danger: Quicksand" belongs in some magazine entitled "Horrible Yarns"; Hassan's "Caliph" is a gem; could we have another unheretofore translated tale from the Arabic?

I'm grateful for the privilege of reading Unknown, and hope you continue folklore-ish tales, like the one about the awakened elf, Ellowan Coppersmith.—Mrs. H. Beasley, Lyndon, Kansas.

Coming next month—"On the Knees of the Gods," the first part of a new three-part serial, by J. Allan Dunn.

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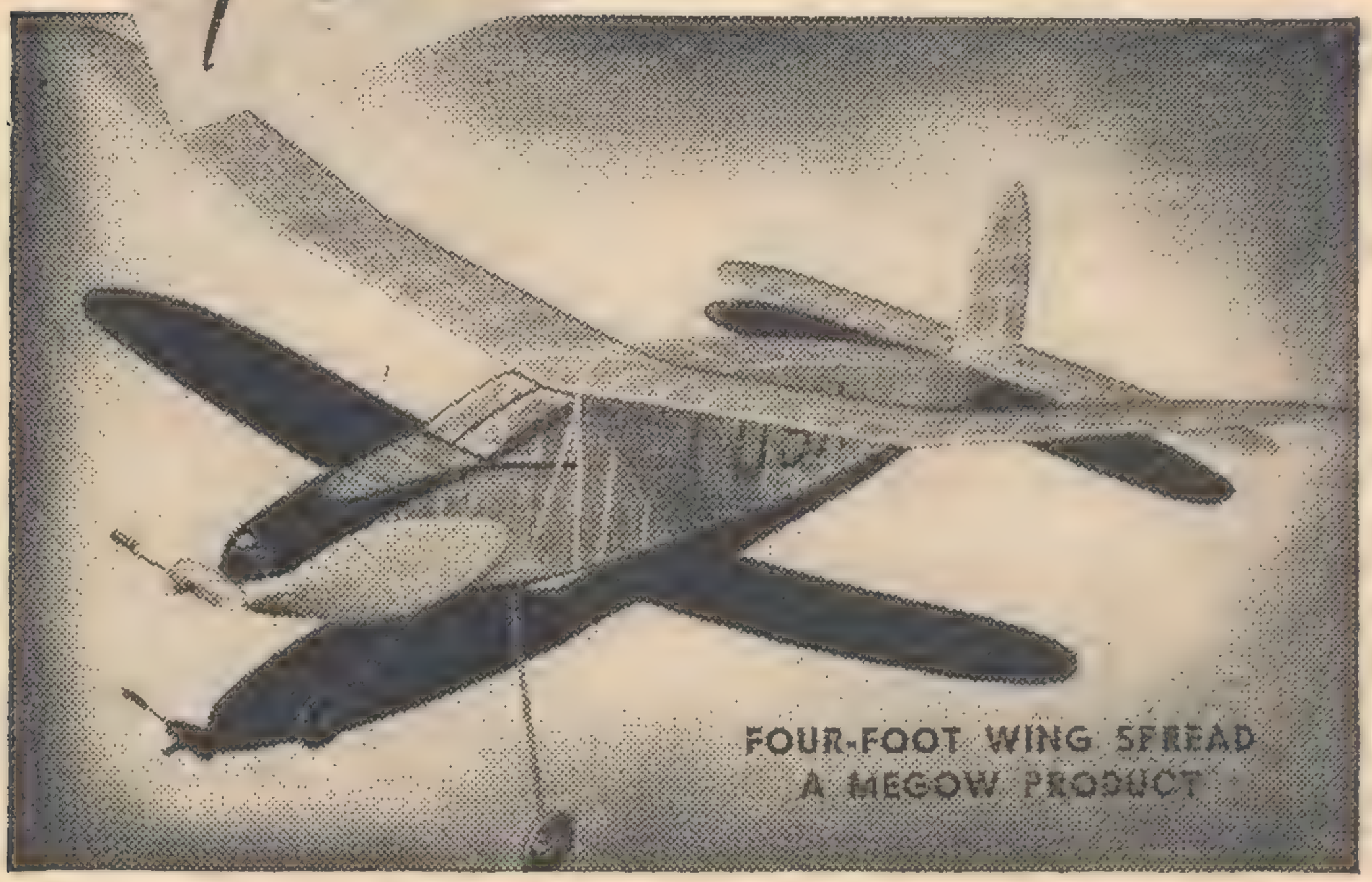

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Continued from page 87

As this was translated, the Bulgar looked puzzled for a moment. Then he turned red. Padway thought he was angry, but it soon appeared that he was trying to keep from laughing. He said between sputters:

"This time, man, it will be different."

"If any pants are lost—"

"They will be yours."

"How would this be?"

"You pay us sixty thousand—"

"In three installments—"

"Of twenty thousand each?"

But Padway was immovable. The Bulgar finished:

"I shall inform my master—"

"Kardam, the Great Khan of the Kutrigurs—"

"Of your obduracy."

"For a reasonable bribe—"

"I am prepared to tell him—"

"Of the might of the Gothic arms—"

"In terms that shall dissuade him—"

"From his projected invasion."

Padway beat the Bulgar down to half the bribe he originally asked, and they parted on the best of terms. When he went around to his quarters he found Fritharik trying to wind a towel around his head.

He looked up with guilty embarrassment. "I was just trying, excellent boss, to make a headgear like that of the Hunnish gentleman. It has style."

Padway had long since decided that Thiudahad was a pathological case. But lately the little king was showing more definite signs of mental failure. For instance, when Padway went to see about a new inheritance law, Thiudahad gravely listened to him explain the reasons that the Royal Council and Cassiodorus had agreed upon for bringing the Gothic law more into line with the Roman.

Then he said: "When are you going to put out another book in my name, Martinus? Your name *is* Martinus, isn't it? Martinus Paduei, Martinus Paduei. Didn't I appoint you prefect or something? Dear me, I can't seem to remember anything. Now, what's this you want to see me about? Always business, business, business. I hate business. Scholarship is more important. Silly state papers. What is it, an order for an execution? I hope you're going to torture the rascal as he deserves. I can't understand this absurd prejudice of yours against torture. The people aren't happy unless they're terrified of their government. Let's see, what was I talking about?"

It was convenient in one way, as Thiudahad didn't bother him much. But it was awkward when the king simply refused to listen to him or to sign anything for a day at a time.

Then he found himself in a hot dispute with the paymaster general of the Gothic army. The latter refused to put the Imperialist mercenaries whom Padway had captured on the rolls. Padway argued that the men were first-rate soldiers who

seemed glad enough to serve the Italo-Gothic state. The paymaster general replied that national defense had been a prerogative of the Goths since the time of Theoderik, and the men in question were not, with some few exceptions, Goths. Q. E. D.

Each stubbornly maintained his point, so the dispute was carried to Thiudahad. The king listened to the argument with a specious air of wisdom.

Then he sent the paymaster general away and told Padway: "Lots to be said on both sides, dear sir, lots to be said on both sides. Now, if I decide in your favor, I shall expect a suitable command for my son Thiudegiskel."

Padway was horrified, though he tried not to show it. "But, my lord king, what military experience has Thiudegiskel had?"

"None; that's just the trouble. Spends all his time drinking and wenching with his wild young friends. He needs a bit of responsibility. Something good, consistent with the dignity of his birth."

Padway argued some more. But he didn't dare say that he couldn't imagine a worse commander than this self-conceited and arrogant young puppy. Thiudahad was obstinate. "After all, Martinus, I'm king, am I not? You can't browbeat me and you can't frighten me with your Wittigis. Heh, heh! I'll have a surprise for you one of these days. What was I talking about? Oh, yes. You do, I think, owe Thiudegiskel something for putting him in that horrid prison camp—"

"But *I* didn't put him in jail—"

"Don't interrupt, Martinus. It isn't considerate. Either you give him a command, or I decide in favor of the other man, what's-his-name. That is my final royal word."

So Padway gave in. Thiudegiskel was put in command of the Gothic forces in Calabria, where, Padway hoped, he wouldn't be able to do much harm. Later he had occasion to remember that hope.

Then three things happened. General Sisigis sent word of suspicious activity among the Franks.

Padway got a letter from Thomasus, which told of an attempt on the life of ex-king Wittigis. The assassin had inexplicably sneaked into the dugout, where Wittigis, though slightly wounded in the process, had killed him with his bare hands. Nobody knew who the assassin was until Wittigis had declared, with many a bloodcurdling curse, that he recognized the man as an old time secret agent of Thiudahad. Padway knew what that meant: Thiudahad had discovered Wittigis' whereabouts, and meant to put his rival out of the way. If he succeeded, he'd be prepared to defy Padway's management, or even to heave him out of his office. Or even worse.

Finally Padway got a letter from Justinian. It read:

> Justinian, Emperor of the Romans, to King Thiudahad, Greetings.
>
> Our serenity's attention has been called to the terms which you propose for termination of the war between us.
>
> We find these terms so absurd and unreasonable that our deigning to reply at all is an act of great condescension on our part. Our holy endeavor to recover for the Empire the provinces of western Europe, which belonged to our forebears and rightfully belong to us, will be carried through to a victorious conclusion.
>
> As for our former general, Flavius Belisarius, his refusal of parole is an act of gross disloyalty, which we shall fittingly punish in due course. Meanwhile the illustrious Belisarius may consider himself free of all obligations to us. Nay more, we order him to place himself unreservedly under the orders

of that infamous heretic and agent of the Evil One who calls himself Martinus Paduei, of whom we have heard. We are confident that, between the incompetence and cowardice of Belisarius and the heavenly wrath that will attach to those who submit to the unclean touch of the diabolical Martinus, the doom of the Gothic kingdom will not be long delayed.

Padway realized, with a slightly sick feeling, that he had a lot to learn about diplomacy. His defiance of Justinian, and of the Frankish kings, and of the Bulgars, had each been justified, considered by itself. But he shouldn't have committed himself to taking them on all at once.

The thunderheads were piling up fast.

XIV.

Padway dashed back to Rome and showed Justinian's letter to Belisarius. He thought he had seldom seen a more unhappy man than the stalwart Thracian.

"I don't know," was all Belisarius would say in answer to his questions. "I shall have to think."

Padway got an interview with Belisarius' wife, Antonina. He got along fine with this slim, vigorous redhead.

She said: "I've told him repeatedly that he'd get nothing but ingratitude from Justinian. But you know how he is—reasonable about everything except what concerns his honor. The only thing that would make me hesitate is my friendship with the Empress Theodora. That's not a connection to be thrown over lightly. But after this letter— I'll do what I can, excellent Martinus."

Belisarius, to Padway's unconcealed delight, finally capitulated.

The immediate danger point seemed to be Provence. Padway's rumor-collecting service had gathered a story of another bribe paid by Justinian to the Franks to attack the Goths. So Padway did some shuffling. Asinar, who had sat at Senia for months without the gumption to move against the Imperialists in Spalato, was ordered home. Sisigis, who, if no genius, was not obviously incompetent, was transferred to command of Asinar's Dalmatian army. And Belisarius was given command of Sisigis' forces in Gaul. Belisarius, before leaving for the North, asked Padway for all the information available about the Franks.

Padway explained: "Brave, treacherous, and stupid. They have nothing but unarmored infantry, who fight in a single deep column. They come whooping along, hurl a volley of throwing-axes and javelins, and close with the sword. If you can stop them by a line of reliable pikemen, or by cavalry charges, they're suckers for mounted archers. They're very numerous, but such a huge mass of infantry can't forage over enough territory to keep themselves fed. So they have to keep moving or starve.

"Moreover, they're so primitive that their soldiers are not paid at all. They're expected to make their living by looting. If you can hold them in one spot long enough, they melt away by desertion.

"Try to send agents into Burgundy to rouse the Burgunds against the Franks, who conquered them only a few years ago." He explained that the Burgunds were of East-German origin, like the Goths and Lombards, spoke a language much like theirs, and like them were primarily stock raisers. Hence they didn't get on with the West-German Franks, who were agriculturists when they weren't devastating their neighbors' territory.

A FEW DAYS later Padway had an opportunity of hearing what people thought of him. He was eating in a restaurant when a couple of Italians at the next table got to talking. One said: "What has your brother been doing lately, Marcus?"

"You won't believe it when I tell you. He's working for the government. Mysterious Martinus has him and others all over Italy turning over manure piles for the little yellow crystals that are found on the bottom."

"Do you think Mysterious Martinus is mad, or is possessed by the devil?"

"Mad, I'd say, though there is some argument as to whether the two aren't the same thing. But it seems to be a useful sort of madness. He does get things done."

"So I hear. Is it true that he never sleeps at all, but spends the night galloping about from city to city?"

"No. My brother says his foreman went to see Martinus one day, and found him fast asleep in his chair."

All Padway had known about the manufacture of gunpowder was that it was made of sulphur, charcoal, and potassium nitrate. He supposed that potassium nitrate could be obtained somewhere as a mineral, but he didn't know where, or what it would look like. He couldn't synthesize it with the equipment at hand, even if he'd known enough industrial chemistry. But he did remember reading somewhere about the manure piles. And he remembered an enormous pile in Nevitta's yard. So he called on Nevitta and asked permission to dig. He whooped with joy when, sure enough, there were the crystals, looking rather like maple sugar. Nevitta told him to his face that he was crazy.

"Sure," replied Padway, grinning broadly. "Didn't you know that? I've been that way for years. But you'll admit my lunacy sometimes has effective results."

His old house on Long Street was as full of activity as ever, despite the move to Florence. It was used as Rome headquarters by the Telegraph Company, and he was having another press set up. And now the remaining space downstairs became a chemical laboratory. Padway didn't know what proportions of the three ingredients made good gunpowder, and the only way to find out was by experiment.

He also gave out orders, in the government's name, for casting and boring a cannon. The brass foundry who took the job weren't very cooperative. They had never seen any such contraption, and weren't at all sure they could make it. What did he want this tube for, anyway; a flower pot?

It took them an interminable time to get the pattern and core made, despite the simplicity of the thing. Meanwhile Padway selected fifteen archers from the ex-Imperialists, and an equal number of Goths from the Rome garrison. Among the latter were several who had belonged to his short-lived engineer corps in the campaign against Belisarius. The former were Anatolians, mostly from the Isuarian mountains. Their native speech was a weird and wonderful mixture of Greek and Armenian dialects, together with some fantastically complicated Asianic languages. But they all spoke enough camp Latin to get along.

Padway swore them all to secrecy, not so much because he wanted to keep his plans for a battery of cannon dark, as because he shrewdly thought it would be good for their morale to think they were

being let in on a great secret. He lectured them in his house at night on ballistics and artillery tactics. Nobody would have guessed, least of all his pupils, that he was making up the lectures largely as he went along. He appointed an intelligent-seeming Goth, Rekkared Wereka's son, to command them.

Then, in the early spring, Urias appeared in Rome. He explained that he'd left the military academy in the hands of subordinates, and was coming down to see about raising a militia force of Romans, which had been another of Padway's ideas. But he had an unhappy, hangdog air that made Padway suspect that that wasn't the real reason.

To Padway's leading questions he finally burst out: "Excellent Martinus, you'll simply have to give me a command somewhere away from Ravenna. I can't stand it there any longer."

Padway put his arm around Urias' shoulders. "Come on, old man, tell me what's bothering you. Maybe I can help."

Urias looked at the ground. "Uh . . . well . . . that is— Look here, just what's the arrangement between you and Mathasuenta?"

"Oh, so *that's* it! I thought so. You've been seeing her, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have. And if you send me back there, I shall see her some more in spite of myself. Are you and she betrothed, or what?"

"I did have some such idea once." Padway put on the air of one about to make a great sacrifice. "But, my friend, I wouldn't stand in the way of anybody's happiness. I'm sure you're much better suited to her than I. My work keeps me too busy to make a good husband. So if you want to sue for her hand, go to it, with my blessing."

"You *mean* that?" Urias jumped up and began pacing the floor, fairly beaming. "I . . . I don't know how to thank you . . . it's the greatest thing you could do for me . . . I'm your friend for life—"

"Don't mention it; I'm glad to help you out. But now that you're down here, you might as well finish the job you came to do."

"Oh," said Urias soberly. "I suppose I ought to, at that. But how shall I press my suit, then?"

"Write her."

"But how can I? I don't know the pretty phrases. In fact, I've never written a love letter in my life."

"I'll help you out with that, too. Here, we can start right now." Padway got out writing materials, and they were presently concocting a letter to the princess. "Let's see," said Padway reflectively, "we ought to tell her what her eyes are like."

"They're just like eyes, aren't they?"

"Of course, but in this business you compare them to stars and things."

Urias thought. "They're about the color of a glacier I once saw in the Alps."

"No, that wouldn't do. It would imply that they were as cold as ice."

"They also remind you of a polished sword blade."

"Similar objection. How about the northern seas?"

"Hm-m-m. Yes, I think that would do, Martinus. Gray as the northern seas."

"It has a fine, poetic ring to it."

"So it has. Northern seas it shall be, then." Urias wrote slowly and awkwardly.

Padway said: "Hey, don't bear down so hard with that pen. You'll poke a hole in the paper."

PADWAY's thoughts were abruptly snatched from the re-militarization of the Italians when Junianus came in with a telegraph message. It read simply:

> Wittigis escaped from detention last night. No trace of him has been found.
> (Signed)
> ATURPAD THE PERSIAN,
> commanding.

For a minute Padway simply stared at the message. Then he jumped up and yelled: "Fritharik! Get our horses!"

They clattered over to Urias' headquarters. Urias looked very grave. "This puts me in an awkward position, Martinus. My uncle will undoubtedly make an effort to regain his crown. He's a stubborn man, you know."

"I know. But you know how important it is to keep things going the way they are."

"*Ja.* I won't go back on you. But you couldn't expect me to try to harm my uncle. I like him, even if he is a thick-headed old grouch."

"I promise you I'll do my best to see that he isn't harmed. But just now I'm concerned with keeping him from harming *us.*"

"How do you suppose he got out? Bribery?"

"I know as much as you do. I doubt the bribery; at least, Aturpad is generally considered an honorable man. What do you think Wittigis will do?"

"If it were me, I'd hide out for a while and gather my partisans. That would be logical. But my uncle never was very logical. And he hates Thiudahad worse than anything on earth. Especially after Thiudahad's attempt to have him murdered. My guess is that he'll head straight for Ravenna and try to do Thiudahad in personally."

"All right, then, we'll collect some fast cavalry and head that way ourselves."

Padway thought he was pretty well hardened to long-distance riding. But it was all he could do to stand the pace that Urias set. When they reached Ravenna in the early morning he was reeling, red-eyed, in the saddle.

They asked no questions, but galloped straight for the palace. The town seemed normal enough. Most of the citizens were at breakfast. But at the palace the normal guard was not to be seen.

"That looks bad," said Urias. They and their men dismounted, drew their swords, and marched in six abreast. A guard appeared at the head of the stairs. He grabbed at his sword, then recognized Urias and Padway.

"Oh, it's you," he said noncommittally.

"Yes, it's us," replied Padway. "What's up?"

"Well . . . uh . . . you'd better go see for yourselves, noble sirs. Excuse me." And the Goth whisked out of sight.

They tramped on through the empty halls. Doors shut before they came to them, and there was whispering behind them. Padway wondered if they were walking into a trap. He sent back a squad to hold the front door.

At the entrance to the royal apartments they found a clump of guards. A couple of these brought their spears up, but the rest simply stood uncertainly. Padway said calmly, "Stand back, boys," and went in.

There were several people standing around a body on the floor. Padway asked them to stand aside, which they did meekly. The body was that of Wittigis. His tunic was ripped by a dozen sword and spear

wounds. The rug under him was sopping.

The chief usher looked amazedly at Padway. "This just happened, my lord. Yet you have come all the way from Rome because of it. How did you know?"

"I have ways," said Padway. "How did it happen?"

"Wittigis was let into the palace by a guard friendly to him. He would have killed our noble king, but he was seen, and other guards hurried to the rescue. The guards killed him," he added unnecessarily. Anybody could see that.

A sound from the corner made Padway look up. There crouched Thiudahad, half dressed. Nobody seemed to be paying him much attention. Thiudahad's ashy face peered at Padway.

"Dear me, it's my new prefect, isn't it? Your name is Cassiodorus. But how much younger you look, my dear sir. Ah, me, we all grow old sometime. Heh-heh. Let's publish a book, my dear Cassiodorus. Heigh-ho, yes, indeed, a lovely new book with purple covers. Heh-heh. We'll serve it for dinner, with pepper and gravy. That's the way to eat a fowl. Yes, three hundred pages at least. By the way, have you seen that rascally general of mine, Wittigis? I heard he was coming to call. Dreadful bore; no scholar at all. Heigh-ho, dear me, I feel like dancing. Do you dance, my dear Wittigis? La-la-la, la-la-la, dum de-um de-um."

Padway told the king's house physician: "Take care of him, and don't let him out. The rest of you, go back to work as if nothing had happened. Somebody take charge of the body. Replace this rug, and made the preparations for a dignified but modest funeral. Urias, maybe you'd better tend to that." Urias was weeping. "Come on, old man, you can do your grieving later. I sympathize, but we've got things to do." He whispered something to him, whereat Urias cheered up.

XV.

THE MEMBERS of the Gothic Royal Council appeared at Padway's office with a variety of scowls. They were men of substance and leisure, and didn't like being dragged practically away from their breakfast tables, especially by a mere civil functionary.

Padway acquainted them with the circumstances. "As you know, my lords, under the unwritten constitution of the Gothic nation, an insane king must be replaced as soon as possible. Permit me to suggest that present circumstances make the replacement of the unfortunate Thiudahad an urgent matter."

Wakis growled: "That's partly *your* doing, young man. We could have bought off the Franks—"

"Yes, my lord, I know all that. The trouble is that the Franks won't stay bought, as you very well know. In any event, what's done is done. Neither the Franks nor Justinian have moved against us yet. If we can run the election of a new king off quickly, we shall not be any worse off than we are."

Wakis replied: "We shall have to call another convention of the electors, I suppose."

Another councilor, Mannfrith, spoke up: "Apparently our young friend is right, much as I hate to take advice from outsiders. When and where shall the convention be?"

There were a lot of uncertain throaty noises from the Goths. Padway said: "If my lords please, I have a suggestion. Our new civil capital is to be at Florence, and

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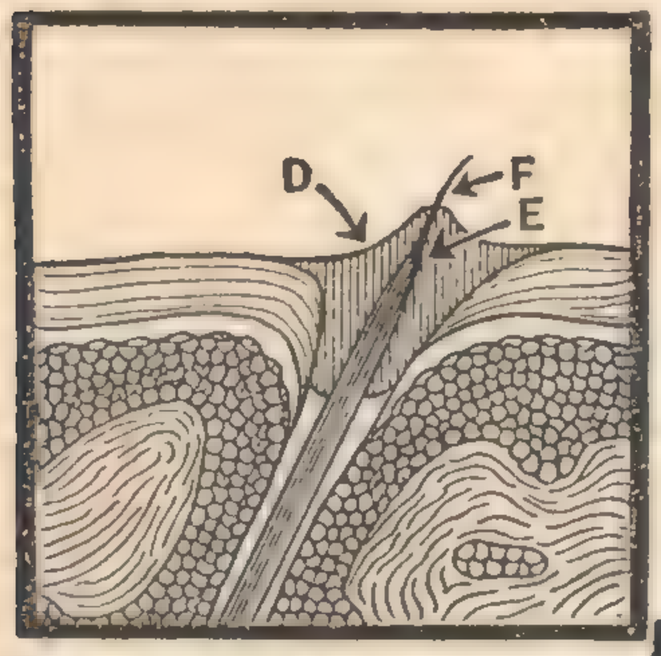

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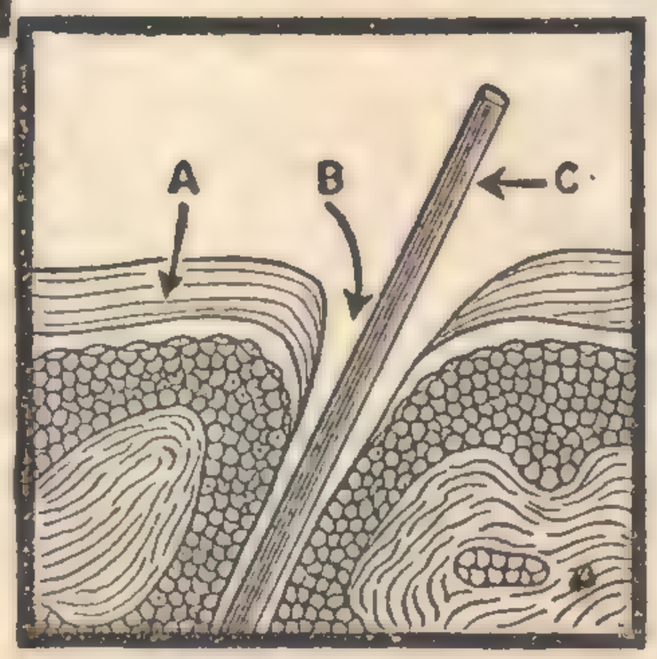

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what more fitting way of inaugurating it is there than holding our election there?"

There was more growling, but nobody produced a better idea. Padway knew perfectly well that they didn't like following his directions, but that, on the other hand, they were glad to shirk thought and responsibility themselves.

Wakis said: "We shall have to give time for the messages to go out, and for the electors to reach Florence—"

Just then Urias came in. Padway took him aside and whispered: "What did she say?"

"She says she will."

"When?"

"Oh, in about ten days, I think. It doesn't look very nice so soon after my uncle's death."

"Never mind that. It's now or never."

Mannfrith asked: "Who will the candidates be? I'd like to run myself, only my rheumatism has been bothering me so."

Somebody said: "Thiudegiskel will be one. He's Thiudahad's logical successor."

Padway said: "I think you'll be pleased to hear that our esteemed General Urias will be a candidate."

"What?" cried Wakis. "He's a fine young man, I admit, but he's ineligible. He's not an Amal."

Padway broke into a triumphant grin. "Not now, my lords, but he will be by the time the election is called." The Goths looked startled. "And, my lords, I hope you'll all give us the pleasure of your company at the wedding."

During the wedding rehearsal, Mathasuentha got Padway aside. She said: "Really, Martinus, you've been most noble about this. I hope you won't grieve too much."

Padway tried his best to look no-

ble. "My dear, your happiness is mine. And if you love this young man, I think you're doing just the right thing."

"I *do* love him," replied Mathasuentha. "Promise me you won't sit around and mope, but will go out and find some nice girl who is suited to you."

Padway sighed convincingly. "I'll be hard to forget you, my dear. But since you ask it, I'll promise. Now, now, don't cry. What will Urias think? You want to make *him* happy, don't you? There, that's a sensible girl."

The wedding itself was quite a gorgeous affair in a semibarbaric way. Padway discovered an unsuspected taste for stage management, and introduced a wrinkle he'd seen in pictures of United States Military Academy weddings: that of having Urias' friends make an arch of swords under which the bride and groom walked on their way down the church steps. Padway himself looked as dignified as his moderate stature and nondescript features permitted. Inwardly he was holding on tight to repress a snicker. It had just occurred to him that Urias' long robe looked amazingly like a bathrobe he, Padway, had once owned. Except that Padway's robe hadn't had pictures of saints embroidered on it in gold thread.

As the happy couple departed, Padway ducked out of sight around a pillar. Mathasuentha, if she saw him out of the tail of her eye, may have thought that he was shedding a final tear. But actually he was allowing himself the luxury of a long-drawn "*Whew!*" of relief.

PADWAY HAD the news of the impending election sent out over the telegraph, thereby saving the week that would normally be necessary for messengers to travel the length and breadth of Italy, and incidentally convincing some of the Goths of the value of his contraptions. Padway also sent out another message, ordering all the higher military commanders to remain at their posts. He sold Urias on the idea by arguing military necessity. His real reason was a determination to keep Thiudegiskel in Calabria during the election. Knowing Urias, he didn't dare explain this plan to him, for fear Urias would have an attack of knightly honor and, as ranking general, countermand the order.

The Goths had never seen an election conducted on time-honored American principles. Padway showed them. The electors arrived in Florence to find the town covered with enormous banners and posters reading:

VOTE FOR URIAS, THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE!

Lower taxes! Bigger public works! Security for the aged! Efficient government!

And so forth. They also found a complete system of ward heelers to take them in tow, show them the town—not that Florence was much to see in those days—and butter them up generally.

Three days before the election was due, Padway held a barbecue. He threw himself into debt for the fixings. Well, not exactly; he threw poor Urias into debt, being much too prudent to acquire any more liabilities in his own name than he could help.

While he kept modestly in the background, Urias made a speech. Padway later heard comments to the effect that nobody had known Urias could make such good speeches. He

grinned to himself. He had written the speech and had spent all his evenings for a week teaching Urias to deliver it. Privately Padway thought that his candidate's delivery still stank. But if the electors didn't mind, there was no reason why he should.

Padway and Urias relaxed afterward over a bottle of brandy. Padway said that the election looked like a pushover, and then had to explain what a pushover was. Of the two opposing candidates, one had withdrawn, and the other, Harjis Austrowald's son, was an elderly man with only the remotest connection with the Amal family.

Then one of the ward heelers came in breathless. It seemed to Padway that people were always coming in to see him breathless.

The man barked: "Thiudegiskel's here!"

Padway wasted no time. He found where Thiudegiskel was staying, rounded up a few Gothic soldiers, and set out to arrest the young man. He found that Thiudegiskel had, with a gang of his friends, taken over one of the better inns in town, pitching the previous guests and their belongings out in the street.

THE GANG were gorging themselves downstairs in plain sight. They hadn't yet changed their traveling clothes, and they looked tired but tough. Padway marched in. Thiudegiskel looked up. "Oh, it's *you* again. What do you want?"

Padway announced: "I have a warrant for your arrest on grounds of insubordination and deserting your post, signed by Ur—"

The high-pitched voice interrupted: "*Ja, ja,* I know all about that, my dear *Sineigs*. Maybe you thought I'd stay away from Florence while you ran off the election without me, eh? But I'm not like that, Martinus. Not one little bit. I'm here, and I'm a candidate, and anything you try now I'll remember when I'm king. That's one thing about me; I've got an infernally long memory."

Padway turned to his soldiers: "Arrest him!"

There was a great scraping of chairs as the gang rose to its collective feet and felt for its collective sword hilts. Padway looked for his soldiers; they hadn't moved.

"Well?" he snapped.

The oldest of them, a kind of sergeant, cleared his throat. "Well, sir, it's this way. Now we know you're our superior and all that. But things are kind of uncertain, with this election and all, and we don't know whom we'll be taking orders from in a couple of days. Suppose we arrest this young man, and then he gets elected king? That wouldn't be so good for us, now would it, sir?"

"Why—you—" raged Padway.

But the only effect was that the soldiers began to slide out the door. The young Gothic noble named Willimer was whispering to Thiudegiskel, sliding his sword a few inches out of the scabbard and back.

Thiudegiskel shook his head and said to Padway: "My friend here doesn't seem to like you, Martinus. He swears he'll pay you a visit as soon as the election's over. So it might be healthier if you left Italy for a little trip. In fact, it's all I can do to keep him from paying his visit right now."

The soldiers were mostly gone now. Padway realized that he'd better go, too, if he didn't want these well-born thugs to make hamburger of him.

He mustered what dignity he could. "You know the law against dueling."

Thiudegiskel's invincibly good-natured arrogance wasn't even dented. "Sure, I know it. But remember, *I'll* be the one enforcing it. I'm just giving you fair warning, Martinus. That's one thing about—"

But Padway didn't wait to hear Thiudegiskel's next contribution to the inexhaustible subject of himself. He went, full of rage and humiliation. By the time he finished cursing his own stupidity and thought to round up his eastern troops—the few who weren't up north with Belisarius—and make a second attempt, it was too late. Thiudegiskel had collected a large crowd of partisans in and around the hotel, and it would take a battle to dislodge them. The ex-Imperialists seemed far from enthusiastic over the prospect, and Urias muttered something about its being only honorable to let the late king's son have a fair try for the crown.

THE NEXT DAY Thomasus the Syrian arrived. He came in wheezing. "How are you, Martinus? I didn't want to miss all the excitement, so I came up from Rome. Brought my family along."

That meant something, Padway knew, for Thomasus' family consisted not only of his wife and four children, but an aged uncle, a nephew, two nieces, and his black house slave Ajax and *his* wife and children.

The day before the election, Thiudegiskel showed his political astuteness by throwing a barbecue even bigger than Padway's. Padway,

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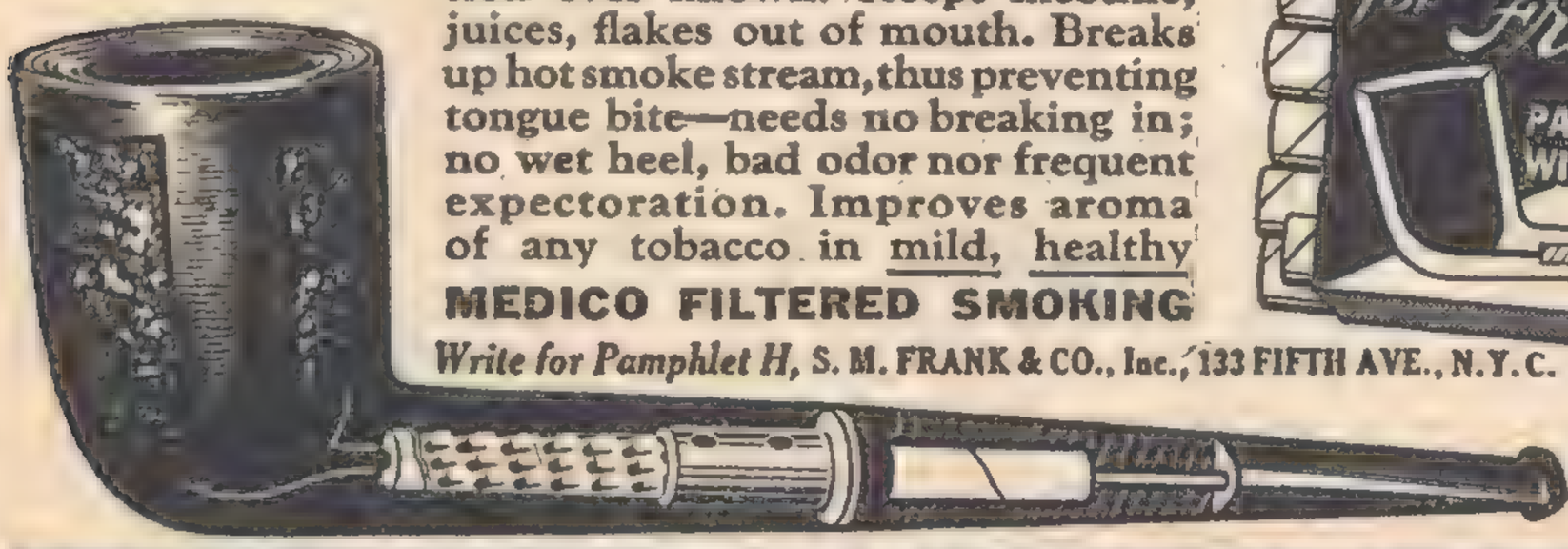

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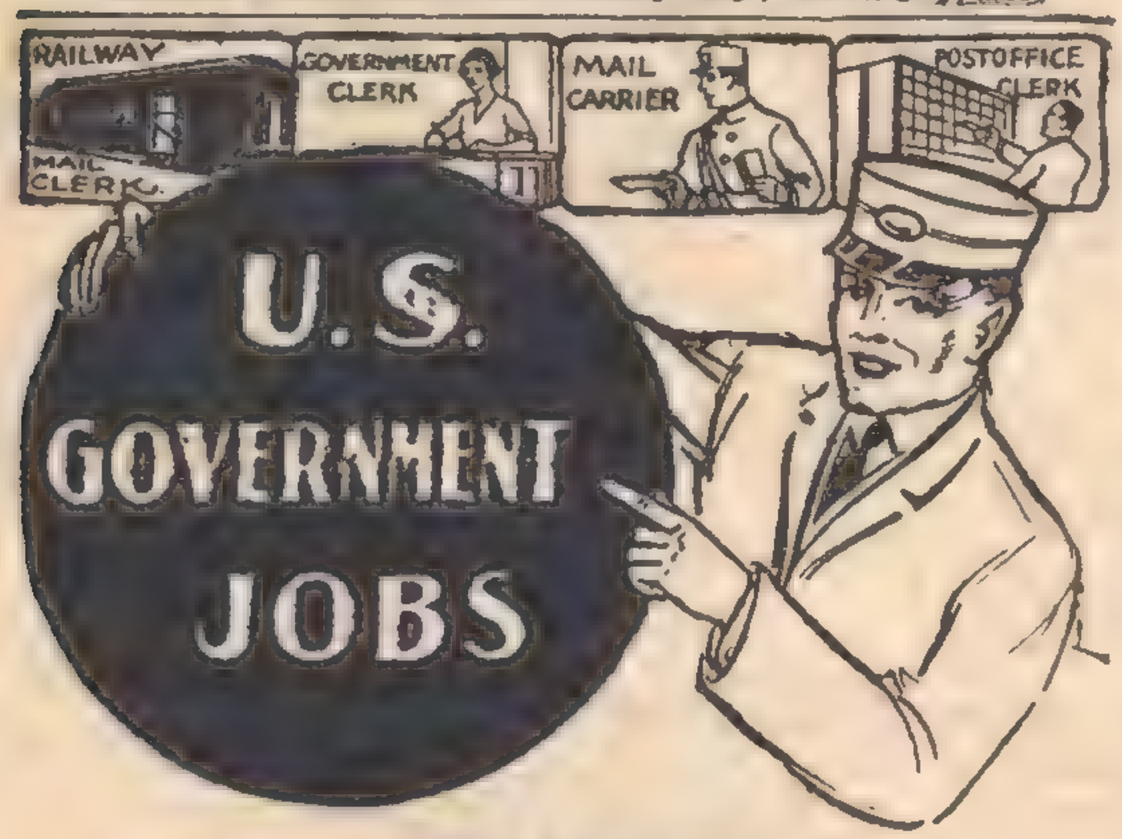

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having some mercy on Urias' modest purse, had limited his party to the electors. Thiudegiskel, with the wealth of Thiudahad's immense Tuscan estates to draw upon, shot the works. He invited all the electors and their families and friends also.

Padway and Urias and Thomasus, with the former's ward heelers, the latter's family, and a sizable guard, arrived at the field outside Florence after the festivities had begun. The field was covered with thousands of Goths of all ages, sizes, and sexes, and was noisy with East German gutturals, the clank of scabbards, and the *flop-flop* of leather pants.

A Goth bustled up to them with beer suds in his whiskers. "Here, here, what are you people doing? You weren't invited."

"*Ni ogs, frijonds,*" said Padway.

"What? You're telling *me* not to be afraid?" The Goth bristled.

"We aren't even trying to come to your party. We're just having a little picnic of our own. There's no law against picnics, is there?"

"Well—then why all the armament? Looks to me as though you were planning a kidnaping."

"There, there," soothed Padway. "You're wearing a sword, aren't you?"

"But I'm official. I'm one of Willimer's men."

"So are these people our men. Don't worry about us. We'll stay on the other side of the road, if it'll make you happy. Now run along and enjoy your beer."

"Well, don't try anything. We'll be ready for you if you do." The Goth departed, muttering over Padway's logic.

Padway's party made themselves comfortable across the road, ignoring the hostile glares from Thiudegiskel's partisans. Padway himself sprawled on the grass, eating little and watching the barbecue through narrowed eyes.

Thomasus said: "Most excellent

General Urias, that look tells me our friend Martinus is planning something particularly hellish."

Thiudegiskel and some of his gang mounted the speakers' stand. Willimer introduced the candidate with commendable brevity. Then Thiudegiskel began to speak. Padway hushed his own party and strained his ears. Even so, with so many people, few of them completely silent, between him and the speaker, he missed a lot of Thiudegiskel's shrill Gothic. Thiudegiskel appeared to be bragging as usual about his own wonderful character. But, to Padway's consternation, his audience ate it up. And they howled with laughter at the speaker's rough and reckless humor.

"—and you know, friends, that General Urias was twelve years old before his poor mother could train him not to— It's a fact. That's one thing about me; I never exaggerate. Of course you *couldn't* exaggerate Urias' peculiarities. For instance, the first time he called on a girl—"

Urias was seldom angry, but Padway could see that the young general was rapidly approaching incandescence. He'd have to think of something quickly, or there *would* be a battle.

His eye fell on Ajax and Ajax's family. The slave's eldest child was a chocolate-colored, frizzy-haired boy of ten.

Padway asked: "Does anybody know whether Thiudegiskel's married?"

"Yes," replied Urias. "The *swein* was married just before he left for Calabria. Nice girl, too; a cousin of Willimer."

"Hm-m-m. Say, Ajax, does that oldest boy of yours speak any Gothic?"

"Why, no, my lord, why should he?"

"What's his name?"

"Priam."

"Priam, would you like to earn a couple of sesterces, all your own?"

The boy jumped up and bowed. Padway found such a servile gesture in a child vaguely repulsive. Must do something about slavery some day, he thought. "Yes, my lord," squeaked the boy.

"Can you say the word '*atta*'?" That's Gothic for 'father.'"

Priam dutifully said: "*Atta.* Now where are my sesterces, my lord?"

"Not so fast, Priam. That's just the beginning of the job. You practice saying '*atta*' for a while."

Padway stood up and peered at the field. He called softly: "Hey, Dagalaif!"

The marshal detached himself from the crowd and came over. "*Hails,* Martinus! What can I do for you?"

Padway whispered his instructions.

Then he said to Priam: "You see the man in the red cloak on the stand, the one who is talking? Well, you're to go over there and climb up on the stand, and say '*atta*' to him. Loudly, so everybody can hear. Say it a lot of times, until something happens. Then you run back here."

Priam frowned in concentration. "But that man isn't my father! This is my father!" He pointed to Ajax.

"I know. But you do as I say if you want your money. Can you remember your instructions?"

So Priam trailed off through the crowd of Goths with Dagalaif at his heels. They were lost to Padway's sight for a few minutes, while Thiudegiskel shrilled on. Then the little Negro's form appeared on the stand, boosted up by Dagalaif's strong arms. Padway clearly heard the childish cry of "*Atta!*"

Thiudegiskel stopped in the middle of a sentence. Priam repeated: "*Atta! Atta!*"

"He seems to know you!" shouted a voice down front.

Thiudegiskel stood silent, scowling and turning red. A low mutter of laughter ran through the Goths and swelled to a roar.

Thiudegiskel shouted: "It's a lie!"

Priam called "*Atta!*" once more, louder.

Thiudegiskel grabbed his sword hilt and started for the boy. Padway's heart missed a beat.

But Priam leaped off the stand into Dagalaif's arms, leaving Thiudegiskel to shout and wave his sword. He was apparently yelling, "It's a lie!" over and over. Padway could see his mouth move, but his words were lost in the thunder of the Gothic nation's Wagnerian laughter.

Dagalaif and Priam appeared, running toward them. The Goth was staggering slightly and holding his midriff. Padway was alarmed until he saw that Dagalaif was suffering from a laughing-and-coughing spell.

He slapped him on the back until the coughs and gasps moderated. Then he said: "If we hang around here, Thiudegiskel will recover his wits, and he'll be angry enough to set his partisans on us with cold steel. In my country we had a word 'scram' that is, I think, applicable. Let's go."

"Hey, my lord," squealed Priam, "where's my two sesterces? Oh, thank you, my lord. Do you want me to call anybody else 'father,' my lord?"

XVI.

Padway told Urias: "It looks like a sure thing now. Thiudegiskel will never live this afternoon's episode down. We Americans have some methods for making elections come out the right way, such as stuffing ballot boxes, and the use of floaters. But I don't think it'll be necessary to use any of them."

"What on earth is a floater, Martinus? You mean a float such as one uses in fishing?"

"No; I'll explain sometime. I don't want to corrupt the Gothic electoral system more than is absolutely necessary."

"Look here, if anybody investigates, they'll learn that Thiudegiskel was the innocent victim of a joke this afternoon. Then won't the effect be lost?"

"No, my dear Urias, that's not how the minds of electors work. Even if he's proved innocent, he's been made such an utter fool of that nobody will take him seriously, regardless of his personal merits, if any."

Just then a ward heeler came in breathless. He gasped: "Thiu-Thiudegiskel—"

Padway complained: "I'm going to make it a rule that people who want to see me have to wait outside until they get their breath. What is it, Roderik?"

Roderik finally got it out. "Thiudegiskel has left Florence, distinguished Martinus. Nobody knows

whither. Willimer and some of his other friends went with him."

Padway immediately sent out over the telegraph Urias' order depriving Thiudegiskel of his colonel's rank—or its rough equivalent in the vague and amorphous Gothic system of command. Then he sat and stewed and waited for news.

It came the next morning during the voting. But it did not concern Thiudegiskel. It was that a large Imperialist army had crossed over from Sicily and landed, not at Scylla where one would expect, but up the coast of Bruttium at Vibo.

Padway told Urias immediately, and urged: "Don't say anything for a few hours. This election is in the bag—I mean it's certain—and we don't want to disturb it."

But rumors began to circulate. Telegraph systems are run by human beings, and few groups of more than a dozen human beings have kept a secret for long. By the time Urias' election by a two-to-one majority was announced, the Goths were staging an impromptu demonstration in the streets of Florence, demanding to be led against the invader.

Then more details came in. The Imperialist army was commanded by Bloody John, and numbered a good fifty thousand men. Evidently Justinian, furious about Padway's letter, had been shipping a really adequate force into Sicily in relays.

Padway and Urias figured that they could, without recalling troops from Provence and Dalmatia, assemble perhaps half again as many troops as Bloody John had. But further news soon reduced this estimate. That able, ferocious, and unprincipled soldier sent a detachment across the Sila Mountains by a secondary road from Vibo to Scyllacium, while he advanced with his main body down the Popilian Way to Reggio. The Reggio garrison of fifteen thousand men, trapped at the end of the toe of the boot, struck a few blows for the sake of their honor and surrendered. Bloody John reunited his forces and started north.

Padway saw Urias off in Rome with many misgivings. The army looked impressive, surely, with its new corps of horse archers and its batteries of mobile catapults. But Padway knew that the new units were inexperienced in their novel ways of fighting, and that the organization was likely to prove brittle in practice.

Once Urias and the army had left, there was no more point in worrying. The problem of the composition of gunpowder seemed to have been solved by the main-force method of trying all sorts of proportions of the ingredients until he found one that worked. His gunpowder, if not very efficient, at least went off with a satisfying bang.

But cannon were something else. The first one that the brass foundry delivered looked all right, until Padway examined the breech end closely. The metal here was spongy and pitted, and the gun would have blown up the first time it was fired. The trouble was that it had been cast muzzle down. The solution was to add a foot to the length of the barrel, cast it muzzle up, and saw off the last foot of flawed brass. But this meant time, a commodity of which Padway had precious little. He soon learned that he had none at all.

By piecing together the contradictory information that came in by telegraph, Padway figured out that

this had happened: Thiudegiskel had reached his force in Calabria without interference. He had refused to recognize the telegraphic order depriving him of his command, and had talked his men into doing likewise. Padway guessed that the words of an able and self-confident speaker like Thiudegiskel would carry more weight with the mostly illiterate Goths than a brief, cold message arriving over the mysterious contraption.

Bloody John had moved cautiously; he had only reached Consentia when Urias arrived to face him. That might have been arranged beforehand with Thiudegiskel, to draw Urias far enough south to trap him.

But, while Urias and Bloody John sparred for openings along the river Crathis, Thiudegiskel arrived in Urias' rear—on the Imperialist side. Though he had only five thousand lancers, their unexpected charge broke the main Gothic army's morale. In fifteen minutes the Crathis Valley was full of thousands of Goths—lancers, horse archers, foot archers, and pikemen—streaming off in every direction. Thousands were ridden down by Bloody John's cuirassiers and the large force of Gepid and Lombard horses he had with him. Other thousands surrendered. The rest ran off into the hills, where the rapidly gathering dusk hid them.

Urias managed to hold his lifeguard regiment together, and attacked Thiudegiskel's force of deserters. The story was that Urias had killed Thiudegiskel personally. Padway, knowing the fondness of soldiers for myths of this sort, had his doubts. But it was agreed that Thiudegiskel had been killed, and that Urias and his men had disappeared into the Imperial host in one final, desperate charge, and had been seen no more by those on the Gothic side who escaped from the field.

For hours Padway sat at his desk, staring at the pile of telegraph messages and at a large and painfully inaccurate map of Italy.

"Can I get you anything, excellent boss?" asked Fritharik.

Padway shook his head.

Junianus shook his head. "I fear that our Martinus' mind has become unhinged by disaster."

Fritharik snorted. "That just shows you don't know him. He gets that way when he's planning something. Just wait. He'll have a devilish clever scheme for upsetting the Greeks yet. You run along and tend to your telegraph. Hullo, who's there?"

Rekkared, Padway's artillery officer without artillery, was at the door.

Padway raised his bloodshot eyes and said: "Let him in, Fritharik. How are the cannon coming, Rekkared?"

"The tubes came out all right, sir, as far as I can see. The wainwright says he'll have the carriages ready in a week, wheels and all."

Junianus put his head in the door. "Some more messages, my lord."

"What are they?"

"Bloody John is halfway to Salerno. The natives are welcoming him. Belisarius reports he has defeated a large force of Franks."

"Come here, Junianus. Would you two boys mind stepping out for a minute? Now, Junianus, you're a native of Lucania, aren't you?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You were a serf, weren't you?"

"Well . . . uh . . . my lord . . .

you see—" The plump young man suddenly looked fearful.

"Don't worry; I wouldn't let you be dragged back to your landlord's estate for anything."

"Well—yes, my lord."

"When the messages speak of the 'natives' welcoming the Imperialists, doesn't that mean the Italian landlords more than anybody else?"

"Yes, my lord. The serfs don't care one way or the other. One landlord is as oppressive as the next, so why should they get themselves killed fighting for any set of masters, Greek, or Italian, or Gothic as the case may be?"

"If they were offered their holdings as free proprietors, with no landlords to worry about, do you think they'd fight for that?"

"Why"—Junianus took a deep breath—"I think they would. Yes. Only it's such an extraordinary idea, if you don't mind my saying so."

"Even on the side of Arian heretics?"

"I don't think that would matter. The curials and the city folk may take their Orthodoxy seriously. But a lot of the peasants are half pagan anyway. And they worship their land more than any alleged heavenly powers."

"That's about what I thought," said Padway. "Here are some messages to send out. The first is an edict, issued by me in Urias' name, emancipating the serfs of Bruttium, Lucania, Calabria, Apulia, Campania, and Samnium. The second is an order to General Belisarius to leave screening force in Provence to fight a delaying action in case the Franks attack again and return south with his main body at once. Oh, Fritharik! Will you get Gudareths for me? And I want to see the foreman of the printshop."

When Gudareths arrived, Padway explained his plans to him. The

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little Gothic officer whistled. "My, my, that *is* a desperate measure, noble Martinus. I'm not sure the Gothic Royal Council will approve. If you free all these low-born peasants, how shall we get them back into serfdom again?"

"We're not going to," snapped Padway. "As for the Royal Council, most of them were with Urias, and are now either dead, captured, or God knows where."

"But, Martinus, you can't make a fighting force out of them in a week or two. Take the word of an old soldier, who has killed hundreds of foes with his own right arm. Yes, thousands. These Italians are no good for fighting anyway. No spirit. You'd better rely on what Gothic forces we can scrape together. Real fighters, like me."

"I know all that," said Padway wearily. "I don't hope to lick Bloody John with a lot of raw recruits. But we can at least give him a really hostile country to advance through. You tend to those pikes, and dig up some more retired officers. I've got work for them."

XVII.

It was the latter part of May, 537, when Padway clattered into Calatia with his army. It wasn't much of an army to look at: elderly Goths who had supposed themselves retired from active service, and young sprigs whose voices had hardly finished changing.

As they approached Calatia, where Trajan's Way joined the Latin Way, their scouts reported that the tail of Bloody John's army had just pulled out of the town. Padway snapped his orders. A squadron of lancers trotted out in front, and a force of mounted archers followed them. They disappeared down the road. Padway rode up to the top of a knoll to watch them.

They got smaller and smaller, disappearing and reappearing over humps in the road. He could hear the faint murmur of John's army, out of sight over the olive groves.

Then there was a shouting and clattering, tiny with distance, like a battle between gnats and mosquitoes. Padway fretted with impatience. His telescope was no help, not being able to see around corners. The little sounds went on, and on, and on. Faint columns of smoke began to rise over the olive trees. Good; that meant that his men had set fire to Bloody John's wagon train. His first worry had been that they'd insist on plundering it in spite of orders.

Then a little dark cluster, topped by rested lances that looked as thin as hairs, appeared on the road. Padway squinted through his telescope to make sure they were his men. He trotted down the knoll and gave some more orders. Half his horse archers spread themselves out in a long crescent on either side of the road, and a body of lancers grouped themselves behind it.

Time passed, and the men sweated in their scale-mail shirts. Then the advance guard appeared, riding hard. They were grinning, and some waved bits of forbidden plunder. They clattered down the road between the waiting bowmen.

Their commander rode up to Padway. "Worked like a charm!" he shouted. "We came down on their wagons, chased off the wagon guards, and set them on fire. Then they came back at us. We did like you said; spread the bowmen out and filled them full of quills as they charged; then hit them with the lance when they were all nice and confused. They came back for more, twice. Then John himself came down on us with his whole damned army. So we cleared out. They'll be along any minute."

"Fine," replied Padway. "You know your orders. Wait for us at the Mt. Tifata pass."

So they departed, and Padway waited. But not for long. A column of Imperial cuirassiers appeared, riding hell-for-leather. Padway knew that that meant Bloody John was sacrificing order to speed in his pursuit, as troops couldn't travel through the fields and groves alongside the road at any such speed. Even if he'd deployed it would take his wings some time to come up.

The Imperialists grew bigger and bigger, and their hoofs made a great pounding on the stone-paved road. They looked very splendid, with their cloaks and the plumes on their officers' helmets streaming out behind. Their commander, in gilded armor, saw what he was coming to and gave an order. Lances were slung over shoulders and bows were strung. By that time they were well within range of the crescent, and the Goths opened fire. The quick, flat snap of the bowstrings and the whiz of the arrows added themselves to the clamor of the Byzantines' approach. The commander's horse, a splendid white animal, reared up and was bowled over by another horse that charged into it. The head of the Imperialist column crumpled up into a mass of milling horses and men.

Padway looked at the commander of his body of lancers; swung his arm around his head twice and pointed at the Imperialists. The line of horse archers opened up, and the Gothic knights charged through. As usual they went slowly at first, but by the time they reached the Imperialists their heavy horses had

picked up irresistible momentum. Back went the cuirassiers with a great clatter, defending themselves desperately at close quarters, but pulling out and getting their bows into action as soon as they could.

Out of the corner of his eye, Padway saw a group of horsemen ride over a nearby hilltop. That meant that Bloody John's wings were coming up. He had his trumpeter signal the retreat. But the knights kept on pressing the Imperialist column back. They had the advantage in weight of men and horses, and they knew it. Padway kicked his horse into a gallop down the road after them. If he didn't stop the damned fools they'd be swallowed up by the Imperialist army.

An arrow went by Padway uncomfortably close. He found the peculiar screech that it made much harder on the nerves than he'd expected. He caught up with his Goths, dragged their commander out of the press by main force, and shouted in his ear that it was time to withdraw.

By then the Goths had noticed the forces appearing on their flanks, and began to stream back down the road.

According to plan, the horse archers fell in behind the lancers and galloped after them, the rearmost ones shooting backward.

It was nine miles to the pass, most of it uphill. Padway hoped never to have such a ride again. He was sure that at the next jounce his guts would burst from his abdomen and spill abroad. By the time they were within sight of the pass, the horses of both the pursued and the pursuers were so blown that both were walking Some men had even dismounted to lead their horses. Padway remembered the story of the day in Texas that was so hot that a coyote was seen chasing a jackrabbit with both walking. He translated the story into Gothic, making a coyote a fox, and told it to the nearest soldier. It ran slowly down the line; he could mark its progress by grins and guffaws.

The bluffs were yellow in a late afternoon sun when the Gothic column finally stumbled through the pass. They had lost few men, but any really vigorous pursuer could have ridden them down and rolled them out of their saddles with ease. Fortunately the Imperialists were just about as tired. But they came on nevertheless.

Padway heard one officer's shout, echoing up the walls of the pass: "You'll rest when I tell you to, you lazy swine!"

Padway looked around, and saw with satisfaction that the force he had sent up ahead were waiting quietly in their places. These were the men who had not been used at all yet. The gang who had burned the wagons were drawn up behind them, and those who had just fled sprawled on the ground still farther up the pass.

On came the Imperialists. Padway could see men's heads turn as they looked nervously up the slopes. But Bloody John had apparently not yet admitted that his foe might be conducting an intelligent campaign. The Imperialist column clattered echoing into the narrowest part of the pass, the slanting rays of the sun shooting after them.

Then there was a great thumping roar as boulders and tree trunks came bounding down the slopes. A horse shrieked quite horribly, and the Imperialists scuttled around like ants whose nest has been disturbed.

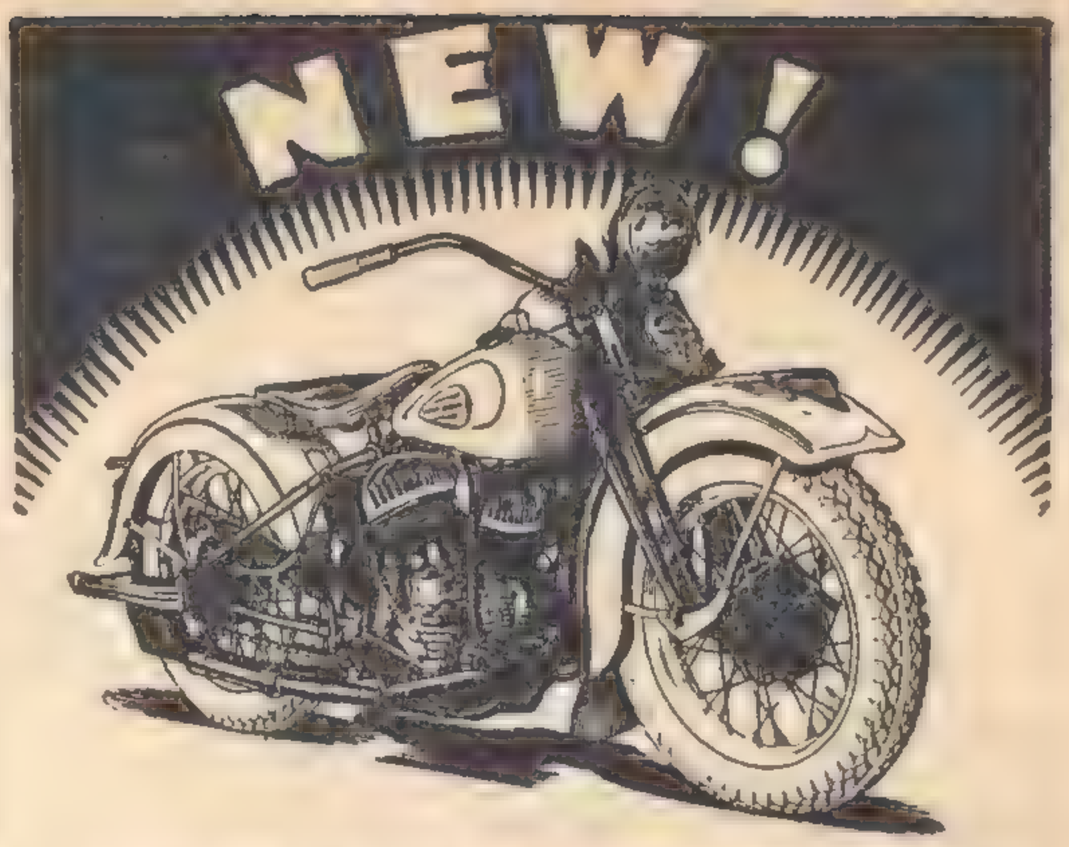
Padway thought, this afternoon's fight was something like the Battle of Killiecrankie, and this is something like Morgarten. He signaled a squadron of lancers to charge.

There was room for only six horses abreast, and even so it was a tight fit. The rocks and logs hadn't done much damage to the Imperialists, except to form a heap cutting their leading column in two. And now the Gothic knights struck the fragment that had passed the point of the break. The cuirassiers, unable to maneuver or even to use their bows, were jammed back against the barrier by their heavier opponents. The fight ended when the surviving Imperialists slid off their horses and scrambled back to safety on foot. The Goths rounded up the abandoned horses and led them back, whooping.

Bloody John withdrew a couple of bowshots. Then he sent a small group of cuirassiers forward to lay down a barrage of arrows. What he intended to do next nobody ever knew. Padway moved some dismounted Gothic archers into the pass. These, shooting from behind the barrier, caused the Imperialists so much trouble that the cuirassiers were soon withdrawn.

Bloody John now sent some Lombard lancers forward to sweep the archers out of the way. But the barrier stopped their charge dead. While they were picking their way, a step at a time, among the boulders, the Goths filled them full of arrows at close range. By the time the bodies of a dozen horses and an equal number of Lombards had been added to the barrier, the Lombards had had enough.

By this time it would have been obvious to a much stupider general than Bloody John that in those confined quarters horses were about as useful as green parrots. The fact



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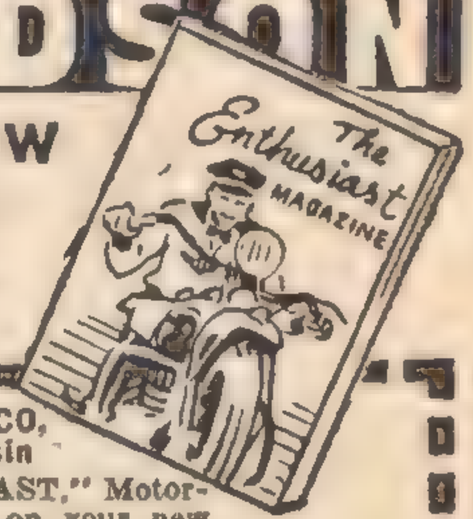

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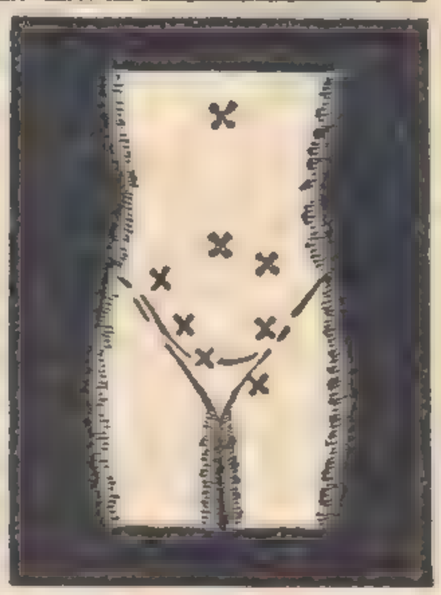

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that the Imperialists could hold their end of the pass as easily as Padway held his could not have been much comfort, because they were trying to get through it and Padway was not. Bloody John dismounted some Lombards and Gepids and sent them forward on foot. Padway meanwhile had moved some dismounted lancers up behind the barrier, so that their spears made a thick cluster. The archers moved back and up the walls to shoot over the knights' heads.

The Lombards and Gepids came on at a slow dogtrot. They were equipped with regular Imperialist mail shirts, but they were still strange-looking men, with the backs of their heads shaven and their front hair hanging down on each side of their faces in two long, butter-greased braids. They carried swords, and some of them immense two-handed battle-axes. As they got closer they began to scream insults at the Goths, who understood their East German dialects well enough and yelled back.

The attackers poured, howling, over the barrier, and began hacking at the hedge of spears. But the spears were too close together for a man to slip between them to get at the spearmen. More attackers, coming from behind, merely pushed the leaders onto the spearpoints. When a man held his shield up, a Goth jabbed him in the legs or belly; when he held it down, he got a spearpoint in the face. And the archers amused themselves by drawing beads on particular hairs of the attackers' whiskers before letting fly. Presently the Imperialists were drifting back from the barrier, lugging wounded men with blood-soaked clothes and arrows sticking in them.

The sun had set, and Bloody John's army retired down the valley to set up its tents and cook its supper. Padway's Goths did likewise. The smell of cooking-fires drifted up

and down pleasantly. Anybody would have thought that here were two gangs of pleasure-seeking campers—but for the pile of dead men and horses at the barrier.

Padway, not underestimating his opponet, threw out a very wide and close-meshed system of outposts. He was justified; an hour before dawn his sentries began to drift in. Bloody John, it transpired, was working two large bodies of Anatolian foot archers over the hills on either side of them. Padway saw that his position would soon be untenable. So his Goths, yawning and grumbling, were routed out of their blankets and started for Benevento.

Benevento, on a small elevation in a little plain, lies at the crotch of the confluence of the Calore and Sabbato rivers. There was only one bridge over the Sabbato, which is a fairly rapid stream. Padway thought he might be able to hold the bridge for some time, if his men didn't get other ideas. He was sure that Bloody John would attack soon. With most of his provisions burned up, and with the country full of hostile peasantry, he couldn't sit still and leave Padway's force hovering in his rear.

But when they came out on the plain, Padway found a horrifying surprise. A swarm of his peasant recruits was coming over the bridge toward him; several thousand of them had already crossed. His strategy depended on being able to get his own force over the bridge quickly, and he knew what would happen if the bottle neck became jammed with retreating troops.

Gudareths rode out to meet him. "I followed your orders!" he shouted. "I tried to hold them back. But they got the idea they could lick the Greeks all by themselves, and started out regardless. I told you they were no good!"

Padway yelled, in a cracked voice, to Gudareths: "Get back over the river somehow! Send mounted men out on the roads to stop the runaways! Let those on this side get back over. I'll try to hold the Greeks here."

He dismounted most of his troops. He arranged the lancers six deep in a semicircle in front of the bridgehead, around the caterwauling peasants, with lances outward. Along the river bank he posted the archers in two bodies, one on each flank, and beyond them his remaining lancers, mounted. Narses' formation at Taginae, he thought. If anything would hold Bloody John, that would.

The Imperialists stood for perhaps ten minutes. Then a big body of Lombards and Gepids trotted out, cantered, galloped straight at his line of spears. Padway, standing afoot behind the line, watched them grow larger and larger. The sound of their hoofs was like that of a huge orchestra of kettledrums, louder and louder. Watching these big, long-haired barbarians loom up out of the dust their horses raised, Padway sympathized with the peasant recruits. If he hadn't had his pride and his responsibility, he'd have run himself until his legs gave out.

On came the Imperialists. They looked as though they could ride over any body of men on earth. Then the bowstrings began to snap. Here a horse reared or bucked; there a man fell off with a musical clash of scale-mail. The charge slowed perceptibly. But they came on. To Padway they looked twenty feet tall. And then they were right on the line of spears. Padway could see the spearmen's tight lips and white

faces. If they held— They did. The Imperialist horses reared, screaming, when the lances pricked them. Some of them stopped so suddenly that their riders were pitched out of the saddle. And then the whole mass was streaming off to right and left, and back to the main army. It wasn't the horses' war, and they had no intention of spitting themselves on the unpleasant-looking lances.

Padway drew his first real breath in almost a minute. He'd been lecturing his men to the effect that no cavalry could break a really solid line of spearmen, but he hadn't really believed it himself until now.

Then an awful thing happened. A lot of his lancers, seeing the Imperialists in flight, broke away from the line and started after their foes on foot. Padway screeched at them to come back, but they kept on running, or rather trotting heavily in their armor. Like at Senlac, thought Padway. With similar results. The alert John sent a regiment of cuirassiers out after the clumsily running mob of Goths, and in a twinkling the Goths were scattering all over the field and being speared like so many boars. Padway raved with fury and chagrin; this was his first serious loss. He grabbed Tirdat by the collar, almost strangling him.

He shouted: "Find Gudareths! Tell him to round up a few hundred of these Italians! I'm going to put them in the line!"

Padway's line was now perilously thin, and he couldn't contract it without isolating his archers and horsemen. But this time John hurled his cavalry against the flanking archers. The archers dropped back down the river bank, where the horses couldn't get at them, and Padway's own cavalry charged the Imperialists, driving them off in a dusty chaos of whirling blades.

Presently the desired peasantry appeared, shepherded along by dirty and profane Gothic officers. The bridge was carpeted with pikes dropped in flight; the recruits were armed with these and put in the front line. They filled out the gap nicely. Just to encourage them, Padway posted Goths behind them, holding swordpoints against their kidneys.

Now, if Bloody John would let him alone for a while, he could set about the delicate operation of getting his whole force back across the bridge without exposing any part of it to slaughter. But it was soon evident that Bloody John had no such intention. On came two big bodies of horse, aimed at the flanking Gothic cavalry.

Padway couldn't see what was happening, exactly, between the dust and the ranks of heads and shoulders in the way. But by the diminishing clatter he judged his men were being driven off. Then came some cuirassiers galloping at the archers, forcing them off the top of the bank again. The cuirassiers strung their bows, and for a few seconds Goths and Imperialists twanged arrows at each other. Then the Goths began slipping off up and down the river, and swimming across.

Finally, on came the Gepids and Lombards, roaring like lions. This time there wouldn't be any arrow fire to slow them up. And Padway knew as well as he knew anything that before they struck, the Italian recruits would drop their pikes and try to claw their way back through the Goths behind them, swordpoints or no swordpoints. Nothing, to their minds, could be more horrible than this onrushing mass of long-haired giant, on their huge horses, waving their huge axes.

So, he thought bitterly, the Italo-Gothic kingdom would end, and all his work would be for nothing. He glanced quite calmly at his watch. They'd arrive in about forty-five seconds—

But the charge slowed down to a trot, and then to a walk. The Imperialist heavy cavalry was not only reining in its horses, but was standing up in its stirrups and peering over its shoulders at something behind it. Then it wheeled about and started back the way it had come.

By this time the dust was so thick that Padway couldn't see what was happening. But from beyond the pall came the tramplings and shoutings and clatterings of a sixth century battle. Padway and his men had no choice but to stand and stew. There was nothing to be seen in front of them but dust, dust, dust. A couple of riderless horses ran dimly past them through it, seeming to drift by like fish in a muddy aquarium tank.

Then a man appeared, running on foot. As he slowed down and walked up to the line of spears, Padway saw that he was a Lombard.

While Padway was wondering if this was some lunatic out to tackle his army single-handed, the man shouted: "*Armaio!* Mercy!" The Goths exchanged startled glances.

Then a couple more barbarians appeared, one of them leading a horse. They yelled: "*Armaio, timrja!* Mercy, comrade! *Armaio, frijonds!* Mercy, friend!"

A plumed Imperial cuirassier rode up behind them, shouting in Latin: "*Amicus! Amicus!*" Then whole companies of Imperialists appeared, horse and foot, German, Slav, Hun, and Anatolian mixed, bawling, "Mercy, friend!" in a score of languages.

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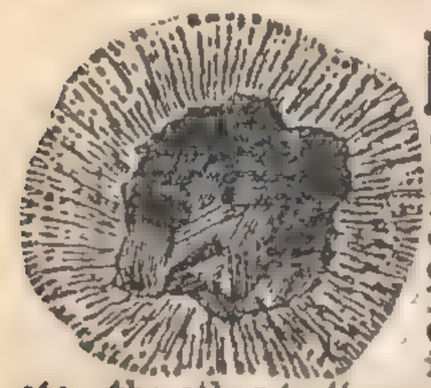

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through the Imperialists. Padway recognized a tall, brown-bearded figure in their midst. He croaked: "Belisarius!"

The Thracian came up, leaned over, and shook hands. "Martinus! I didn't know you with all that dust on your face. I was afraid I'd be too late. We've been riding hard since dawn. We hit them in the rear, and that was all there was to it. We've got Bloody John, and your King Urias is safe. What shall we do with all these prisoners? There must be twenty or thirty thousand of them at least."

Padway rocked a little on his feet. "Oh, round them up and put them in a camp or something. I don't really care. I'm going to sleep on my feet in another minute."

Then there was another wave of movement in the crowd. Four shiny new brass cannon rumbled up. Rekkared, fresh as a daisy, jumped off his horse and came smartly to attention. "Here we are, sir, all ready to go. We've been trying to catch up with General Belisarius ever since he left Rome. Whom do you want us to shoot at?"

Padways stood with his mouth open for a few seconds. Then he broke into a torrent of the first English he had spoken since his arrival in old Rome. He spoke for some minutes without repeating himself once. He used a lot of words that occur in prayer, and a lot more that, while linguistically legitimate enough, are almost never seen in print. His knowledge of Latin and Gothic was not, he thought, really equal to the task.

XVIII.

Back in Rome, Urias said slowly: "Yes, I see your point. Men won't fight for a government they have no stake in. But do you think we can afford to compensate all the loyal

landlords whose serfs you propose to free?"

"We'll manage," said Padway. "It'll be over a period of years. And this new tax on slaves will help." Padway did not explain that he hoped, by gradually boosting the tax on slaves, to make slavery an altogether unprofitable institution. Such an idea would have been too bewilderingly radical for even Urias' flexible mind.

Urias continued: "I don't mind the limitations on the king's power in this new constitution of yours. For myself, that is. I'm a soldier, and I'm just as glad to leave the conduct of civil affairs to others. But I don't know about the royal council."

"They'll agree. I have them more or less eating out of my hand right now. I've shown them how without the telegraph we could never have kept such good track of Bloody John's movements, and without the printing press we could never have roused the serfs so effectively."

"What else is there?"

"We've got to write the kings of the Franks, explaining politely that it's not our fault if the Burgunds prefer our rule to theirs, but that we certainly don't propose to give them back to Burgundy.

"We've also got to make arrangements with the king of the Visigoths for fitting out our ships at Lisbon for their trip to the lands across the Atlantic. He's named you his successor, by the way, so when he dies the east and west Goths will be united again. Reminds me, I have to make a trip to Naples. The shipbuilder down there says he never saw such a crazy design as mine, which is for what we Americans would call a Grand Banks schooner. Procopius'll have to go with me, to discuss details of his history course at our new university."

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"Why are you so set on this Atlantic expedition, Martinus?"

"I'll tell you. In my country we amused ourselves by sucking the smoke of a certain weed called tobacco. It's a fairly harmless little vice if you don't overdo it. Ever since I've arrived here I've been wishing for some tobacco, and the land across the sea is the nearest place you can get any."

Urias laughed his big, booming laugh. "I've got to be off. Your Rekkared is going to put on a demonstration of cannon shooting for the benefit of the Frankish envoy, and I don't want to miss it. I'd like to see a draft of your letter to Justinian before you send it."

"O. K., as we say in America. Give my regards to Mathasuentha. How is she, by the way?"

"She's fine. She's calmed down a lot since all the people she most feared have died or gone crazy or something. When are you going to find a girl, Martinus?"

Padway stretched and grinned. "Oh, just as soon as I catch up on my sleep."

PADWAY wrote:

Urias, King of the Goths and Italians, to His Serenity Justinian, Emperor of the Romans, Greeting.

Your serene highness: Now that the army which recently invaded Italy under John, the nephew of Vitalianus, better known as Bloody John, is no longer an obstacle to our reconciliation, we think this an opportune time to resume discussion of the terms on which this cruel and unprofitable war between us can be honorably terminated. The terms proposed by us in our previous letter stand, with the following exceptions:

1. We waive our demand for the evacuation of Sicily and Dalmatia, as our troops have already occupied these territories. Instead, Imperial troops shall evacuate the African province of Carthage. In making this demand, we are animated by no spirit of ruthless conquest, but are merely re-establish-

ing the line that Theodosius set up between the eastern and western parts of the Empire. We sincerely believe that our government has attained a degree of maturity and wisdom that entitles it to take over the rule of the former western half of the Empire, which it can, because of considerations of distance, administer more expediently than our colleagues at Constantinople. We are so sure that you will agree to the justice of this demand that we have taken the liberty of anticipating your highness' wishes, by dispatching a force to occupy Carthage.

2. Our previously asked indemnity of one hundred thousand solidi is doubled, to compensate our citizens for damages caused by Bloody John's invasion.

3. We waive our request for iron workers from Damascus, as our Minister of Finance, Thomasus the Syrian, has already secured the services of an adequate number of these artisans through his private business connections in Syria.

4. The other terms stand.

There remains the question of the disposal of your general, Bloody John, at present in our custody. While we have never seriously contemplated the collection of Imperial generals as a hobby, your serenity's actions have forced us into a policy that looks very much like it. But, as we have no desire to cause the Empire any serious loss, we will release the said John on payment of a modest ransom of fifty thousand solidi. We earnestly urge your serenity to consider this course favorably. As you know, the Kingdom of Persia is at present ruled by King Khusrau, a man of extraordinary force and ability. We have reason to believe that Khusrau will in a few years attempt another invasion of your Syrian territory. You will need the ablest generals you can find.

Furthermore, our slight ability to foresee the future, of which you have heard, informs us that in about thirty years there will be born in Arabia a man named Mohammed, who, preaching a heretical religion, will, unless prevented, instigate a great wave of fanatical barbarian conquest, subverting not only the present rule of Persia, but that of your serenity's dominions as well. We therefore urge the desirability of securing control of the Arabian peninsula forthwith, that this calamity shall be stopped at the source.

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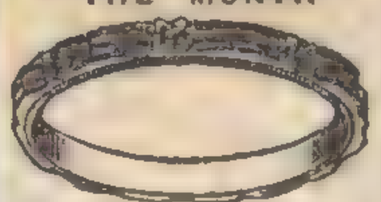
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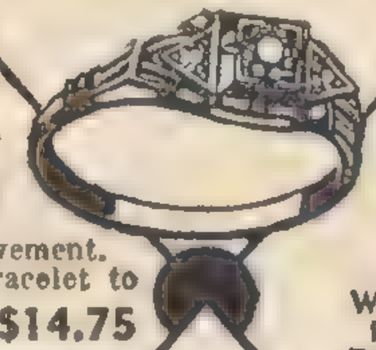

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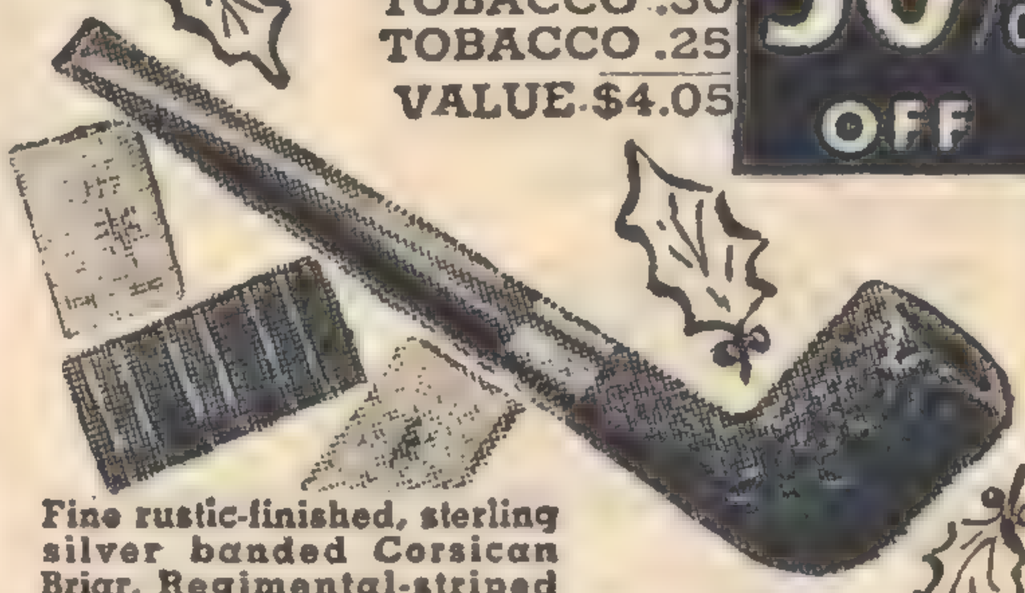

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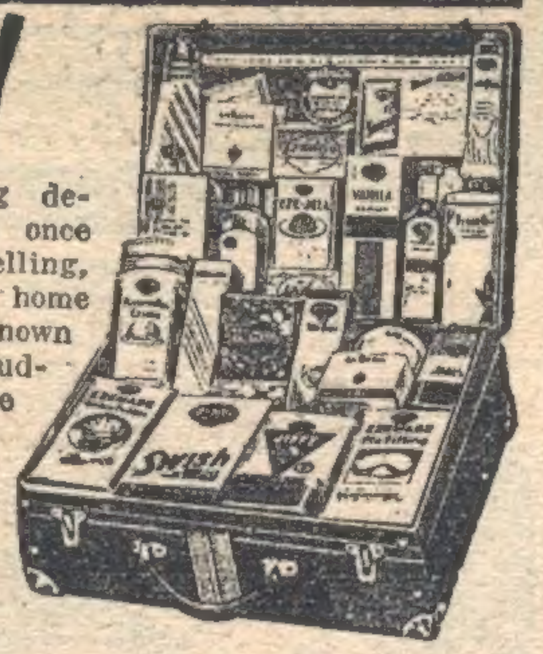

Own a steady route distributing delicious food products. Profits at once and all year 'round. Fast selling, quick repeating foods and other home necessities—over 200 nationally known products. Complete Outfit, including large assortment of full size packages—FREE to reliable persons. Full or part time. No experience needed. Liberal credit plan. Old reliable company. Write quick for my Free Offer. E. J. Mills, 7980 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Earnings of Men and Women in the fascinating profession of Swedish Massage run as high as $40 to $70 per week but many prefer to open their own offices. Large incomes from Doctors, hospitals, sanitariums and private patients come to those who qualify through our training. Reducing alone offers rich rewards for specialists. Write for Anatomy Charts and booklet—They're FREE.

THE College of Swedish Massage
30 E. Adams St., Dpt. 379, Chicago
(Successor to National College of Massage)

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BENJAMIN AIR RIFLE CO., 884 MARION ST., ST. LOUIS, MO., U. S. A.

Please accept this warning as evidence of our friendliest and most respectful sentiments. We shall await the gracious favor of an early reply.

by MARTINUS PADUEL, Quæstor.

Padway leaned back and looked at the letter. His job wasn't over. It never would be—until disease or old age or the dagger of some local enemy ended it. There was so much to do, and only a few decades to do it in: compasses and steam engines and microscopes and the writ of habeas corpus. He'd teetered along for over a year and a half, grabbing a little power here, placating a possible enemy there, keeping far enough out of the bad graces of the various churches, starting some little art such as the spinning of sheet copper. Maybe he could keep it up for years.

And if he couldn't—if enough people finally got fed up with the innovations of Mysterious Martinus—well, there was a semaphore telegraph system running the length and breadth of Italy, some day to be replaced by a true electric telegraph, if he could find time for the necessary experiments. There was a public letter post about to be set up. There were presses in Florence and Rome and Naples pouring out books and pamphlets and newspapers. Whatever happened to him, these things would go on. They'd become too well rooted to be destroyed by accident.

History had, without question, been changed.

Darkness would not fall.

THE END.

THOUSANDS NOW PLAY

who never thought they could!

Learned Quickly at Home

I didn't dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. Now when I play for people they hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time. *H. C. S., Calif.

Plays on Radio

I am happy to tell you that for four weeks I have been on the air over our local radio station. So thanks to your institution for such a wonderful course. *W. H. S., Alabama

Wouldn't Take $1,000 for Course

The lessons are so simple that anyone can understand them. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for my course. *S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.

Surprised Friends

I want to say that my friends are greatly surprised at the different pieces I can already play. I am very happy to have chosen your method of learning. *B. F., Bronx, N. Y.

Best Method by Far

Enclosed is my last examination sheet for my course in Tenor Banjo. This completes my course. I have taken lessons before under teachers, but my instructions with you were by far the best. *A. O., Minn.

***Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.**

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YOU think it's difficult to learn music: That's what thousands of others have thought! Just like you, they longed to play some instrument—the piano, violin, guitar, saxophone or other favorites. But they denied themselves the pleasure—because they thought it took months and years of tedious study to learn.

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And then they made an amazing discovery! They learned about a wonderful way to learn music at home—without a private teacher—without tedious study—and in a surprisingly short time. They wrote to the U. S. School of Music for the facts about this remarkable short-cut method. And the facts opened their eyes!

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"Thanks to Uncle Sam

– tobacco's better than ever!

... and Luckies always take the better grades!" says Ray Oglesby, tobacco auctioneer for 8 years.

BENJAMIN HAWKS of North Carolina shows Auctioneer Oglesby his fine tobacco seedlings—grown by new U. S. Government methods.

RAY OGLESBY in action. Among *independent* tobacco experts like this famous auctioneer, Luckies are the 2-to-1 favorite over all other brands.

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A. Because, even though crops vary with weather conditions, Uncle Sam's new methods of improving soil, seed and plant-food have done a fine job.

Q. Do Luckies buy this better tobacco?

A. Yes, indeed—*independent* experts like Ray Oglesby tell you that Luckies always *have* bought the choicer grades of each crop. In fact, that's why Mr. Oglesby has smoked Luckies for 11 years.

Q. Do other tobacco experts prefer Luckies, too?

A. Among these skilled auctioneers, buyers and warehousemen, Luckies are the 2-to-1 favorite.

Try Luckies a week. You'll find them easy on your throat, for the "Toasting" process takes out certain harsh irritants found in all tobacco. You'll also know why . . . **WITH MEN WHO KNOW TOBACCO BEST—IT'S LUCKIES 2 TO 1**

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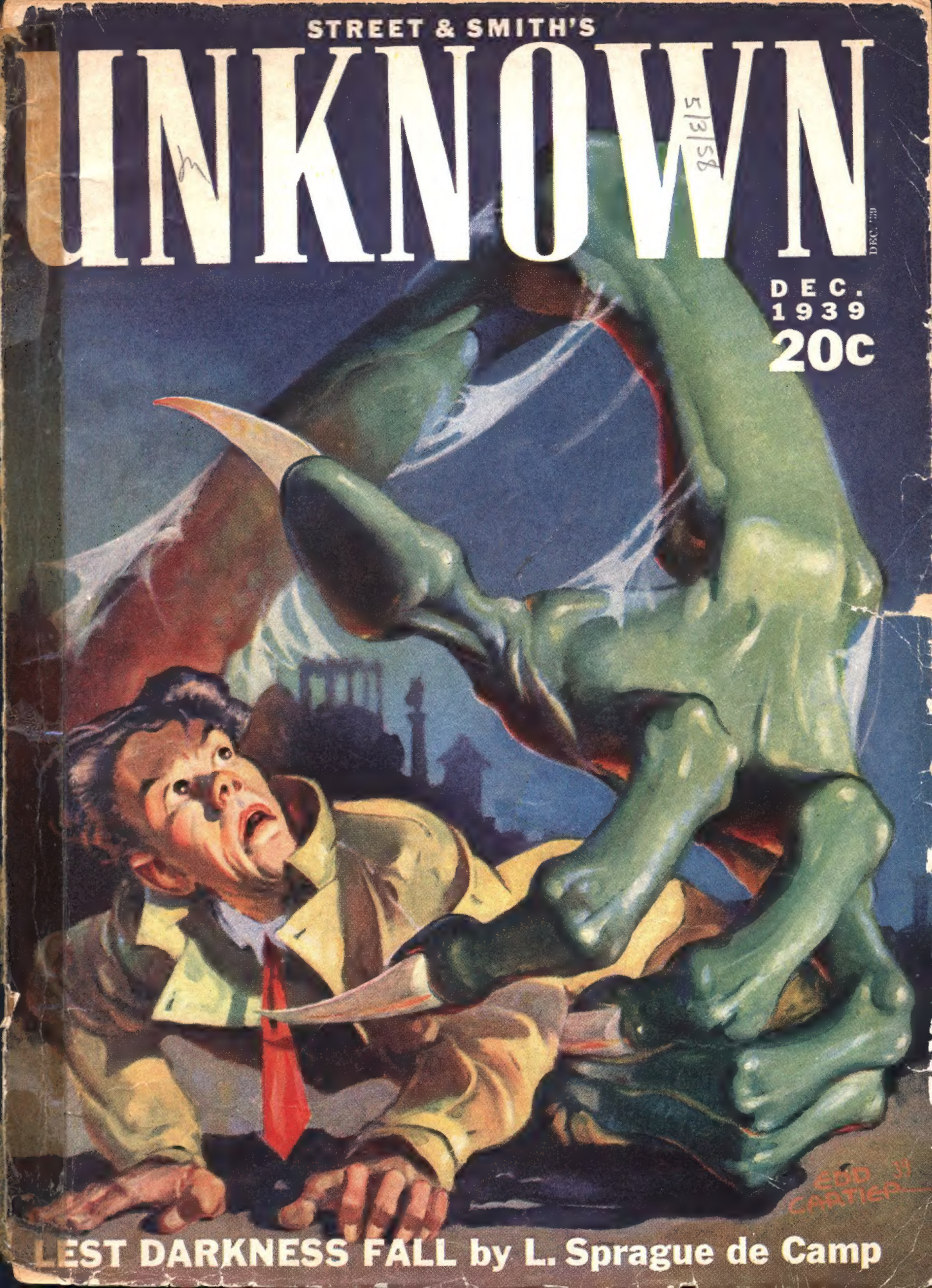

LEST DARKNESS FALL by L. Sprague de Camp